

IS **GOOGLE** ACTUALLY MAKING US SMARTER?

the Atlantic

JULY/AUGUST 2009 THEATLANTIC.COM

THE IDEAS ISSUE

**HOW TO FIX
THE WORLD**

**REJECT
HOMELAND
SECURITY**

**REVOKE
THE VICE
PRESIDENCY**

**REMAKE
THE CLIMATE**

**REALIGN
THE MIDDLE
EAST**

**REDESIGN
THE DOLLAR**

**REWRITE
DRINKING LAWS**

**RENT
YOUR OWN
HOME**

**PLUS:
SANDRA
TSING LOH
THE CASE
AGAINST
MARRIAGE**

**GARRY WILLS
THE GLORY OF
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY**

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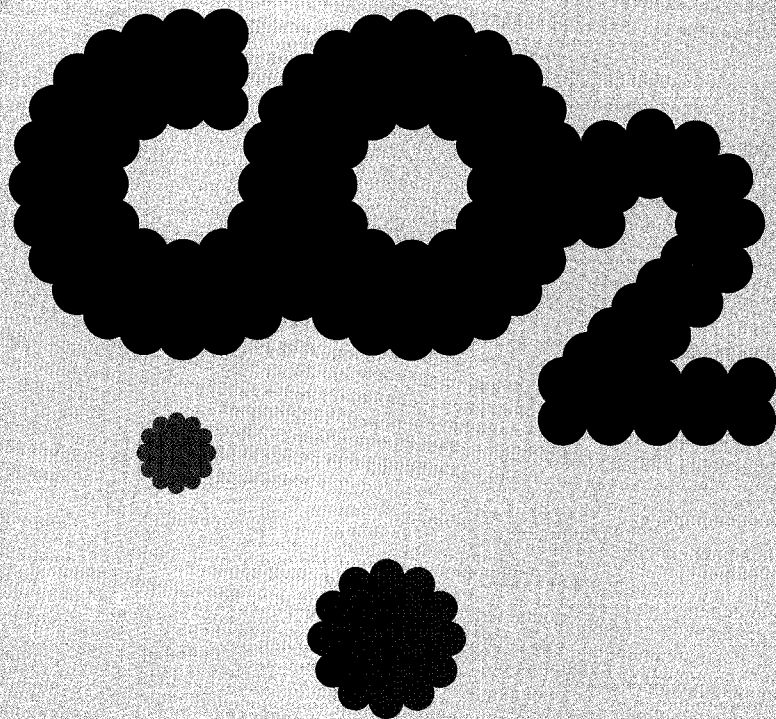
IN THE NEW ENERGY FUTURE, THE POSSIBLE BECOMES PROBABLE.

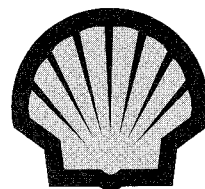
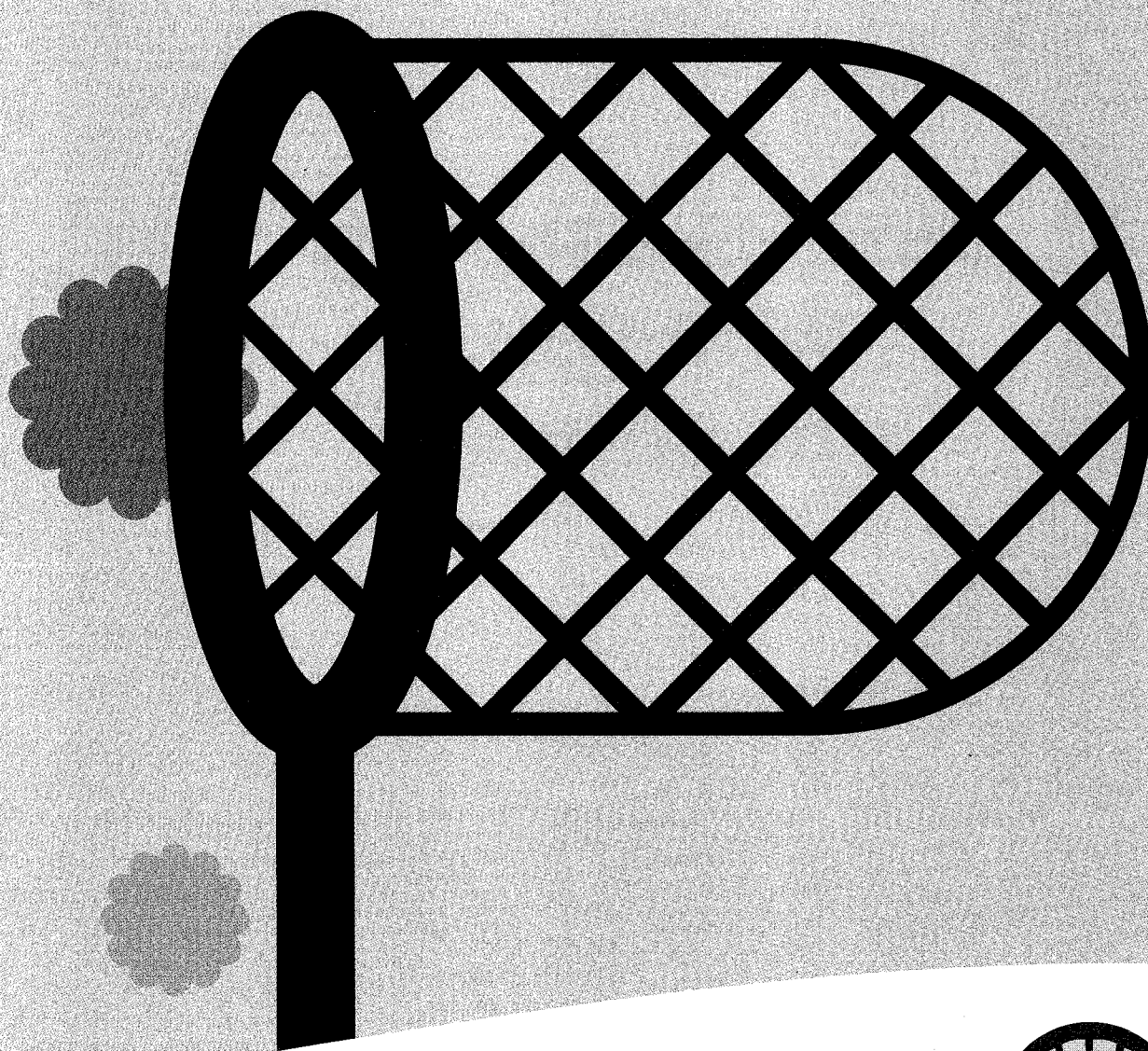
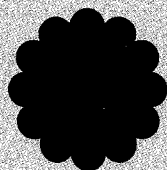
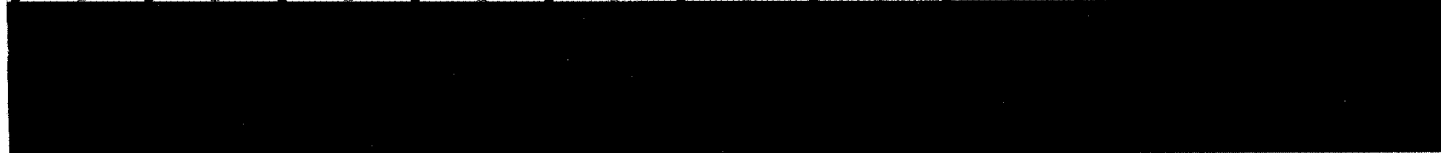
The world needs to tackle CO₂ emissions. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology aims to capture CO₂ and store it safely underground.

We're working on several CCS initiatives around the world, including a demonstration project in California in collaboration with the California Energy Commission and WESTCARB, a U.S. Department of Energy Regional Carbon Sequestration Partnership.

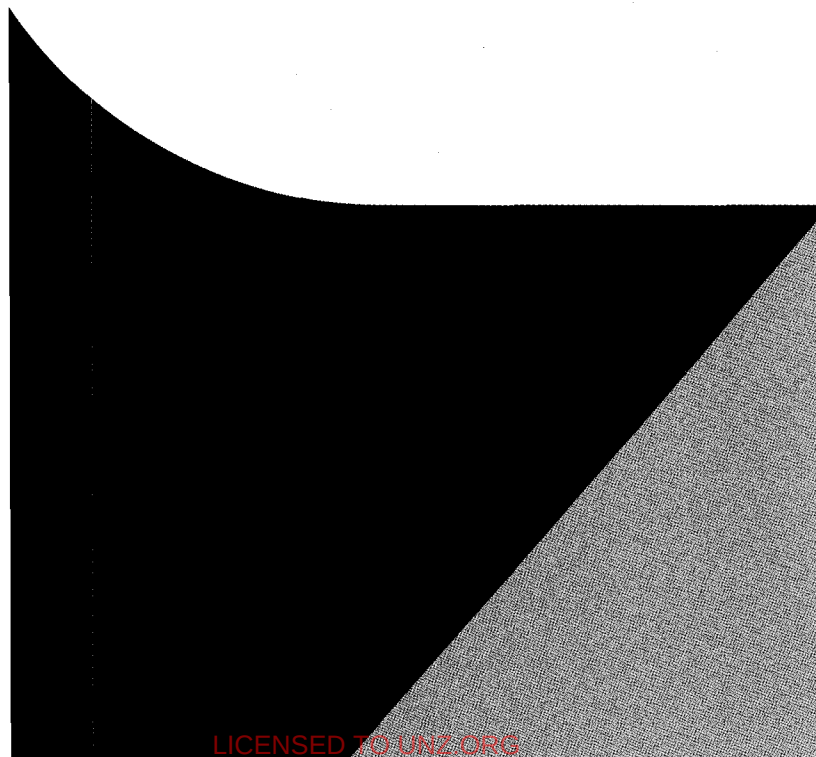
Perfecting CCS won't be easy—at scale, costs will be a challenge and regulatory frameworks are still evolving. But we believe that, with government leadership, managing CO₂ emissions with CCS will be achievable.

To find out how Shell is helping prepare for the new energy future, visit www.shell.com/us/realenergy





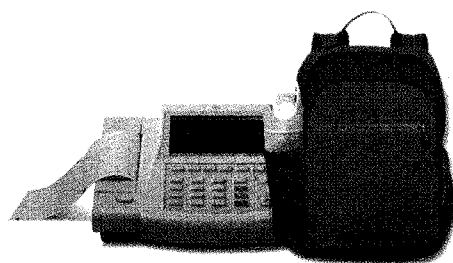
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FEATURES

Quick Fixes

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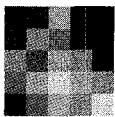
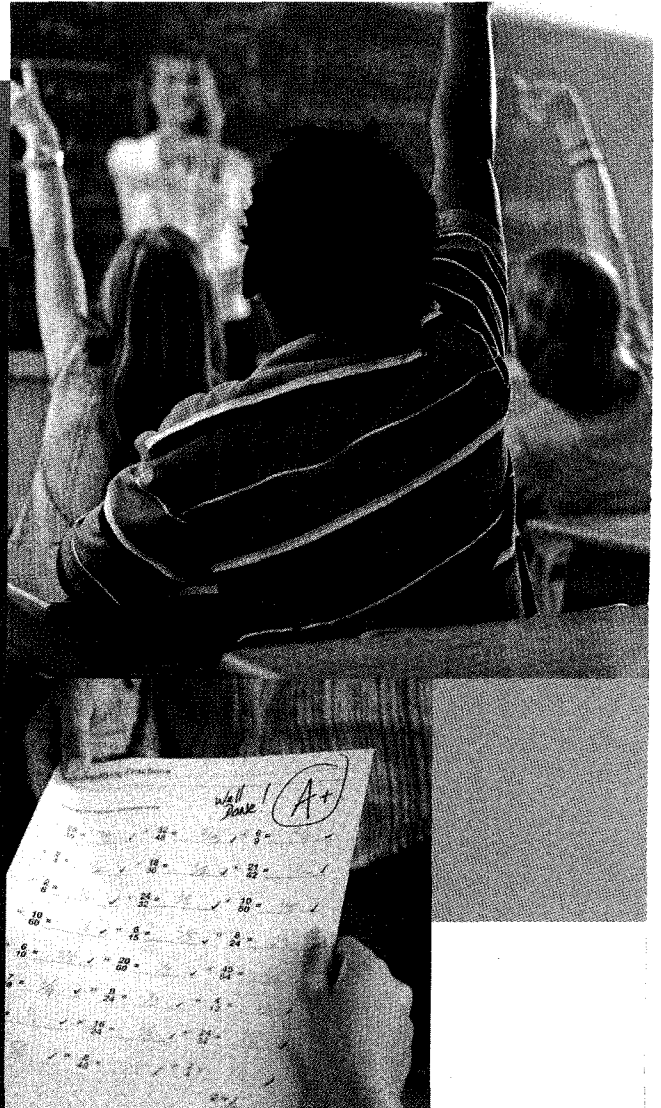
How Iran Could Save the Middle East

IDEAS SPOTLIGHT: INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

At Altria, we believe that strong educational systems empower students with a sense of pride, civic engagement and the passion to succeed. We're particularly passionate about programs that think beyond the classroom and recognize the important roles that parents, community organizations and policymakers play in preparing young people for success in life and work. That's why we'd like to highlight an innovator in helping community leaders think and act differently—the Ready by 21 Partnership.

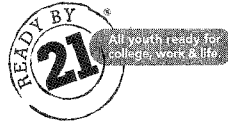
The Partnership is implementing new ways to bring leaders together to link the many supports and services children experience throughout their days and years and ultimately surround kids with an environment that challenges and prepares them for the brightest of futures. Philip Morris USA, an Altria company, is proud to be a major sponsor of the Ready by 21 Partnership, and we are excited to have this approach taking hold in our home community of Richmond, Virginia. We encourage leaders from across the country to join in support of the Partnership and this important work.

To learn more, visit www.altria.com/beyondtheclassroom.



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POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR PASSIONATE LEADERS

Rebuilding our economy has to include a commitment to prepare our youth for college, work and life. American students are not achieving their full potential. One-third of the students who enter ninth grade do not graduate from high school on time. Four out of ten of the students who do graduate are not ready for work. Only four in ten young adults are doing well—productive, healthy and connected.

The solutions are within our grasp. We know what students need to succeed. By making simple investments, we can dramatically improve the odds for children and youth. Countless education, community, business and government leaders share a common passion to help but need more effective ways to join their efforts. Ready by 21® challenges leaders to turn their passion into practice.

The challenge is not that leaders don't care or don't know about the problem. It is that they don't know how to harness their current efforts to forge a common solution. The Forum for Youth Investment, the creators of the successful Ready by 21 approach, is partnering with seven prominent national organizations whose members touch the lives of more than 100 million children and youth—organizations

such as the United Way of America, Corporate Voices for Working Families and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Together, these Partners are providing the tools and incentives their members need to change

the way they do business on the ground. This approach is catching on. Dozens of communities and states across the nation are taking on Ready by 21's bold challenge, increasing the quality and reach of learning opportunities in school and out. United in their common mission, these communities are applying the Ready by 21 action-oriented approach so that many more young people are ready for college, work and life.

"The Ready by 21 framework is exactly right. It's not just about education. It's about families. It's about community. It's about working together to make sure that young people succeed."

Brian Gallagher, President and CEO, United Way of America

Learn how you can help ensure our children and youth are Ready by 21 at www.readyby21.org.

Ready by 21 is a registered trademark of the Forum for Youth Investment.

CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

16...LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GALLERY

46...Fall

By Marc Burkhardt

84...Red, White, and Blue

By Guy Billout

97...Power

By Stephen Doyle

POETRY

72...Homily

By David Lehman

82...Heaven

By William Heyen

136...WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

Control your quintessence,
and other advice

By Jeffrey Goldberg



No credit, no problem, comrade. Good times roll in tepidly capitalist Moldova, page 28.

Dispatches

21...Flight Risk

When a U.S. company ignored
pilot warnings in Colombia,
four Americans died and
three were taken captive.

By Mark Bowden

24...Greening With Envy

How knowing your neighbor's
electric bill can help you cut yours

By Bonnie Tsui

26...Pitchers' Duel

Roger Clemens, Curt Schilling,
and Hall of Fame standards in
the steroid era

By Colin Fleming

28..."What Crisis?"

Why Europe's poorest country
is a paragon of financial stability

By Jeffrey Tayler

FOOD

32...Fixing Lunch

Tony Geraci is determined
to get healthy food to the kids
in Baltimore's public schools.

By Corby Kummer

TRAVEL

34...At Land's End

In Russia's vast Far East, most
of the people are gone,
but the birds are abundant.

By Rachel Dickinson

TECHNOLOGY

38...The Rating Game

The spread of ratings systems
is freeing consumers to focus
on the decisions that matter.

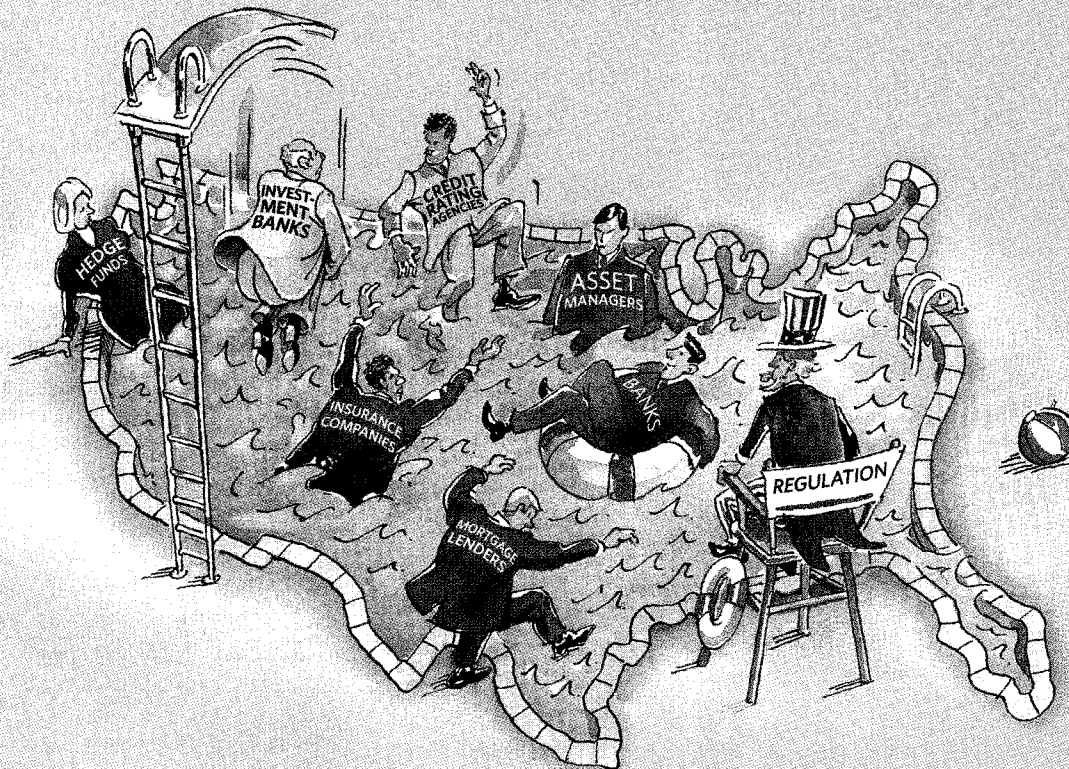
By Kevin Maney

Cover art
by Alex Ostroy

Everybody in the pool.



THE FEDERAL REGULATORY OVERHAUL SHOULD INCLUDE
THE ENTIRE FINANCIAL INDUSTRY.



The time to save America's economic future from drowning is now. **To do it thoroughly and effectively, we need bold federal regulatory reform for the entire financial industry.** As an active member of that industry, Allstate has a few ideas to keep our country afloat:

1. COOPERATE

The entire financial system—banks, hedge funds, credit rating agencies, regulators, investment banks, insurance companies and more—is intertwined and interlinked. We must work together to understand the risks and solve the issues. **No one can be left out of the solution, or it won't be a solution.**

2. BE TRANSPARENT

Clarity is key. Only when there is transparency around valuing the risk in the financial system—including the

role of insurance to help mitigate that risk—will we regain confidence in the economy. And only when we streamline and simplify financial information will consumers be able to make truly informed choices.

3. REINVENT

Congress must design federal regulation for the 21st century. It's time to replace the patchwork of regulation coming from countless state and federal agencies with comprehensive rules to oversee all financial businesses—those that pose systemic risk and those that don't.

Let's draft strong, clear federal regulation to protect our country from this ever happening again. With everyone swimming in the same pool, we can be real agents of change. **Go to allstate.com/fedreg.**

America's economic future needs to be better protected. That's Allstate's Stand.



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Home
Life
Retirement

CONTENTS



The closer Harry Potter gets to sex, the trickier things become, page 40.

Columns

MOVING PICTURES

40...Sex and the Single Wizard

The peculiar challenge of adapting *Harry Potter* for the screen

By James Parker

BUSINESS

44...Home Economics

Even in a depression, it seems, Americans won't stop feathering their nests.

By Megan McArdle

CONTENT

48...Last Stand

Why *The Economist* is thriving while *Time* and *Newsweek* fade

By Michael Hirschorn

Books

EDITOR'S CHOICE

113...Land of Hope and Glory

The latest volume of Kevin Starr's history chronicles the triumph—and points toward the tragedy—of the California Good Life.

By Benjamin Schwarz

116...Let's Call the Whole Thing Off

The author is ending her marriage. Isn't it time you did the same?

By Sandra Tsing Loh

128...Misery's Child

The cruelty and degeneracy Lincoln was subjected to in his youth forged his iron will.

By Christopher Hitchens

134...Cover to Cover

A slacker's miscellany; the long-haul lobby; wuthering Wordsworths; Vishnu anew; and more

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THEATLANTIC.COM



PODCAST

My Failed Marriage

Sandra Tsing Loh discusses romance, infidelity, raising kids, and why her marriage came undone after 20 years of hard work.



VIDEO

A Wizard Grows Up

James Parker considers the limited pleasures and incoherent enchantments of an adolescent Harry Potter.



SLIDESHOW

Currency Exchange

Michael Bierut explains why we should ditch the dollar, and assesses the aesthetics of some of the best—and worst—foreign currencies.



INTERVIEW

The Weekly That Was

Michael Hirschorn talks to Bob Cohn about why the digital age spells doom for *Time* and *Newsweek*, but not for *The Economist*.



BLOGS

Into the Fray

Twelve new voices join The Atlantic's online roster, including Richard Posner, Edward Tenner, Richard Florida, and Lisa Margonelli.

COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

A mandate for change is a mandate for smart.

The world is ready for change – that much is clear.

For leaders of all kinds, this moment presents a rare opportunity. Our planet is not just getting smaller and flatter. It is also becoming smarter. And that means we have the potential to change the way the world literally works.

Computational power is now being put into things we wouldn't recognize as computers – cars, appliances, cameras, roadways...even pharmaceuticals and livestock. We are interconnecting all of this through the Internet, which has come of age. And we are applying powerful new systems and sophisticated analytics to turn oceans of data into insight, knowledge and intelligence.

Consider the changes already under way.

Smart traffic systems are helping to reduce gridlock by 20%, cutting pollution and increasing ridership on public transit.

Smart food systems based on RFID technology embedded into supply chains are monitoring meat, poultry and other items from the farm to the super-market shelf.

Smart healthcare systems are helping to lower the cost of therapy by as much as 90%.

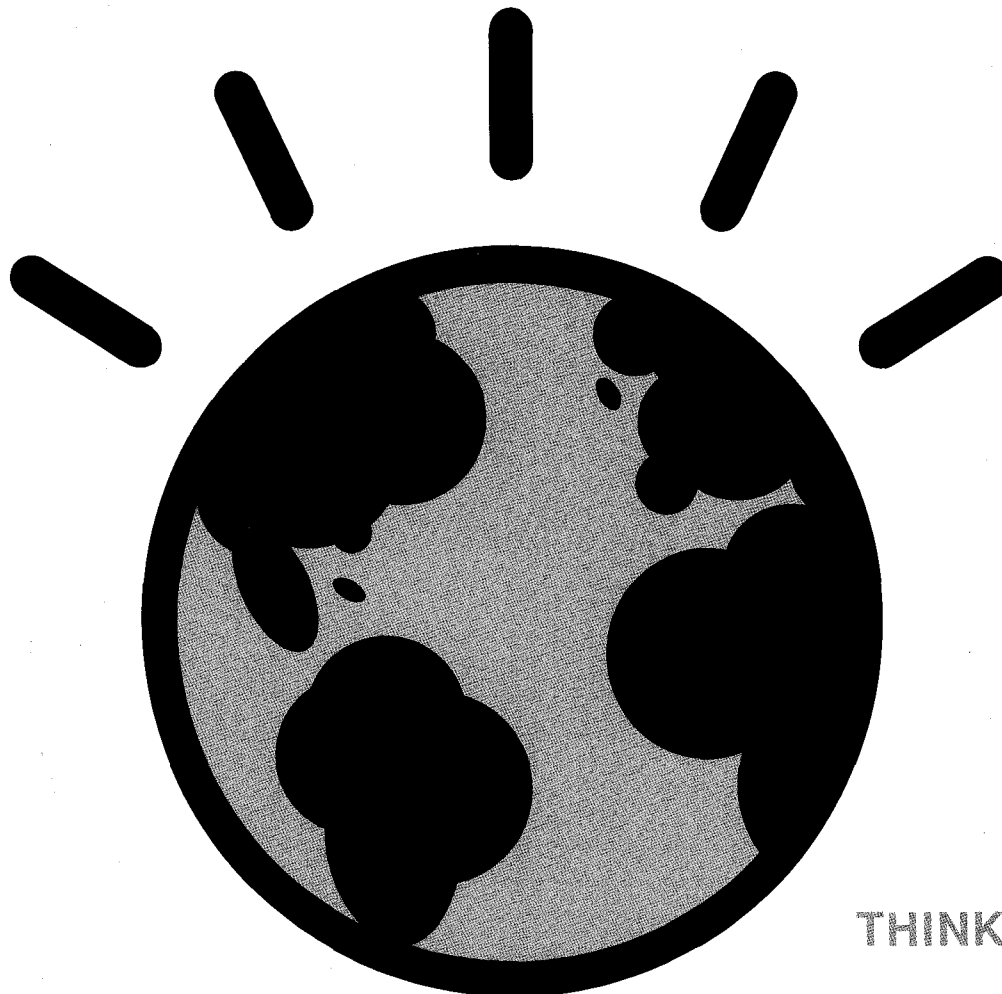
Police departments are correlating street-level information from myriad observations and devices to identify crime patterns – helping prevent crime, rather than simply punishing it.

The list is long, and the transformation is just beginning. Its benefits will be reaped not only by large enterprises, but also by mid-sized and small companies – the engines of economic growth everywhere – and by individuals and communities around the world.

Imagine how a smarter planet will transform *all* the things we seek. The ways we pursue economic growth, societal progress, environmental sustainability and cures for disease. The way we interact with each other and with the world.

The opportunity is before us, and the moment will not last forever. Will we seize it? As we look to stimulate our economies and rebuild our infrastructure, will we simply repair what's broken? Or will we prepare for a smarter future?

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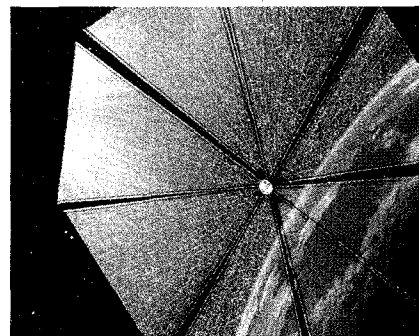
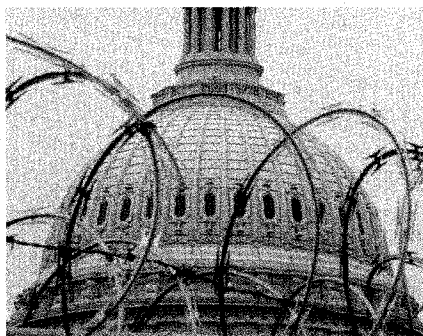
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



MACRO METAMORPHOSIS

Simon Johnson ("The Quiet Coup," May *Atlantic*) offers a bold and pathbreaking idea for dealing with the present global economic crisis.

Johnson's basic thesis is that "the financial industry has effectively captured" the government of the U.S. and many other countries and that "recovery will fail unless we break the financial oligarchy that is blocking essential reform." His bold agenda for banking reform may come to seem modest when we take into account the tectonic shifts and major transformations that are now developing in the world economy. For one thing, breaking up the banking oligarchy may spur the breakup of other corporate oligopolies and the termination of big federal subsidies. Americans may adopt Teddy Roosevelt's mood of "trust-busting," with the aim of promoting real competition in place of the elaborate pretense of competition that we see in much of our present system. At the extreme, we would perhaps get into the much-debated system of "industrial planning"—or even the virtual nationalization of industry.

Yet this evolution would still have further to go. We must reckon nowadays with the spreading "deindustrialization" of the U.S., Japan, much of western Europe, and other "advanced" nations. In this, the driving force is industrial competition from China and other "emerging" economies. Increasingly equipped with modern technology, supplied with vast labor forces available for a mere fraction of Western wages and benefits, and given open access to international "free trade," emerging nations already undersell and will eventually sweep away the

corresponding industries in the West. The American economy will be reduced mainly to a system of services: locally bound and mostly small-scale, but generally high quality, capable of attracting foreign investment and foreign visitors as well as serving its own people.

Is this apocalyptic vision of a metamorphosed U.S. economy just a nightmare? Or is it the probable result of financial restrictions and undersold manufacturing? And would it be a more stable, more democratic, and more egalitarian system than we have today?

EDWIN P. REUBENS

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
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GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

Jeffrey Goldberg's article ("What Now?," May *Atlantic*) was an eye-opening and impressive look into our depressive economic state of affairs. His article made me think of a simpler time, when you borrowed money at 6 percent and received 3 percent on your passbook savings account. In 1945 my parents bought the house they lived in for 60 years for \$1,500. They had to put 15 percent down, and Dad had to prove he had a stable job working for the railroad. Like my grandfather before him, he planted a huge garden that fed us (and some of the neighbors) all summer long. Mom canned, which got us through the winter. For spending money, us kids would shovel sidewalks in the winter. Believe it or not, these were the happiest times of my life. I now have a lot more money than my father had, but I also have the stress and worry that goes with it. Maybe it's time to take Mr. Goldberg's advice. Take the 3 percent

interest down at the local credit union and plant a huge garden. We may not die rich, but we'll be a hell of a lot happier than we are now.

JAMES CAMINITI
ALTOONA, PA.

"What now?" asks Jeffrey Goldberg. To get an answer, he spoke to economists, hedge-fund managers, survivalists, and one professional adviser—and apparently not one of them had the right answer: get an independent, credentialed, fee-based adviser, preferably someone who was already advising independently before 2008.

Independent advisers have been around for decades, and our ranks are growing. (Though beware, many of those now joining are desperate brokers leaving their desperate employers.) Many independent advisers are fiduciaries, working conflict-free and fully on behalf of their beneficiary clients. In contrast, as Mr. Goldberg discovered the hard way, most brokers are not fiduciaries, and the law requires only that they purchase "suitable" investments for clients, a low hurdle to clear.

We are the ones offering sound financial advice on a foundation of careful, reasoned analysis and empathetic client care, and regardless of the magnitude of a client's net worth, we are there—for Jeffrey Goldberg, the readers of *The Atlantic*, and the nation.

LEONARD M. GOLUB
CHARTERED FINANCIAL ANALYST
NEW CAPITAL MANAGEMENT LP
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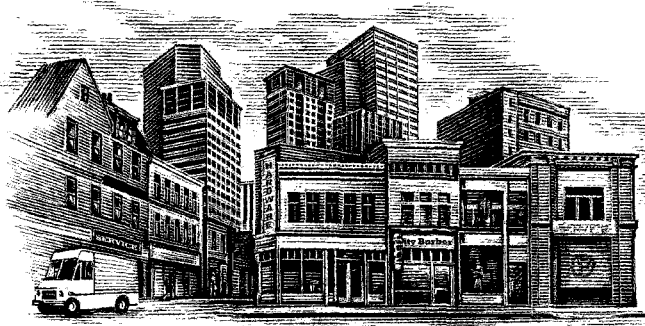
Jeffrey Goldberg replies:

It is true that fee-based advisers have fewer conflicts of interest than the typical

JIM BOURG/REUTERS/CORBIS (LEFT);
RICK STERNBACH © THE PLANETARY SOCIETY (RIGHT)

THE WAY FORWARD > > >

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.



OUR BUSINESS IS LENDING. MORE THAN \$150 BILLION IN THE LAST QUARTER ALONE.

Are banks lending? At JPMorgan Chase the answer is yes. We are extending credit at a healthy rate, approximately \$150 billion in the first quarter of 2009.

We know that lending plays a vital role in the strength and ultimate recovery of our economy. As we have seen in the past, it's bad for the economy for banks to make loans customers cannot repay. Banks must adhere to safe and sound lending standards, and borrowers need to be mindful of their ability to repay.

In tough economic times, demand for loans decreases as borrowers get more cautious. As a result, overall lending often does decline.

But we continue to make loans every day.

During the first quarter of 2009, we extended credit to an estimated 4.5 million consumers through credit cards, mortgages, home equity, auto, and student loans. We also lent billions to small and mid-size businesses, and large corporations.

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broker, and it is true that fiduciaries are duty-bound to act in more-responsible ways than, say, my ex-brokerage house, Merrill Lynch. On the other hand, these independent advisers still might not know anything about investing. I went to top hedge-fund managers to test my suspicion that there are two classes of professionals on Wall Street: a small group of them who know, and a large group of them who don't know, but act like they know in order to separate the small investor from his money. My conclusion is that very few people in the financial-services industry, including members of the subset of increasingly smug independent advisers, have the access, contacts, and brainpower to match the kings of Wall Street. Unless you can persuade a top dog to manage your money—and to do that, you have to have a large amount of money to begin with—the advice remains the same: pay down debt, keep a healthy supply of cash on hand, look for index funds and general-obligation municipal bonds in which to invest, and be exceedingly happy if you earn more than 3 percent a year on your investments.

INTERGALACTIC RELATIONS

If the vastness of the universe is enough to convince Thomas Mallon ("Across the Universe," May *Atlantic*) that there must be intelligent life elsewhere, would he also agree that identical copies of himself must be out there? By what logic does he conclude that

he is so vastly improbable as to occur only once, whereas intelligent life is so probable as to occur more than once? As long as we have only one observed instance of intelligent life (or of Thomas Mallon), whether multiple instances occur is nothing more than conjecture, and any back-of-the-envelope arithmetic is obfuscation.

TIM DORCEY
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

Thomas Mallon replies:

Identical copies? I can't imagine. Intergalactic kissing cousins? I'd bet on it.

A LAND OF NAMASTE

Perspective and context are missing from Robert D. Kaplan's article "India's New Face" (April *Atlantic*). India is one of the world's oldest civilizations, and from its history, we gather an extraordinarily long-standing tradition of diversity rooted in the freedom of thought and dissent. India has seen the development of fundamental math and physics and of an immense breadth of literature and art. And of course, it is the birthplace of multiple religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Jews have continuously lived in India since the Second Temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire, and many cite India as the only land with no history of anti-Semitism. India is where the Zoroastrians have lived and thrived since being expelled from their ancient homeland of Persia; where Christian-

ity has had a home for 2,000 years; and where of course the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile have resided since the Chinese takeover of their land. Against this backdrop, modern India declared itself secular upon independence. It has elected three Muslim presidents, the prime minister is Sikh, and the head of the ruling party is an Italian Catholic woman.

India's challenges remain immense, but its history of tolerance, diversity, and intellectual curiosity provides hope for all 1 billion of its citizens.

VIN MATHUR, M.D.
NEW YORK, N.Y.

ADVICE AND CONSENT

I don't want to sound like a snobbish Francophile, since I like the idea of eating local produce just as much as Corby Kummer does ("Graze Locally," May *Atlantic*), but I must point out that the explanation of what he calls French *pre-salé* lamb just ain't right. First of all, if the term meant "pre-salted" lamb (as in "pre-owned vehicle"), there would be an acute accent on the first *e* (*pré*, as in *préélection*). But the real problem is that the *pré* part (with its acute accent) of *pre-salé* actually means "field or meadow," since those much-prized French lambs are raised on salt meadows or marshes near salt water, just like those now nibbling "the salty grass of Martha's Vineyard" that Kummer mentions in the same sentence. In other words, it's not the lambs who are salted or pre-salted, but the grass they eat. Ah, what an accent can do! Especially if it is French.

STEVEN F. WALKER
PROFESSOR OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.

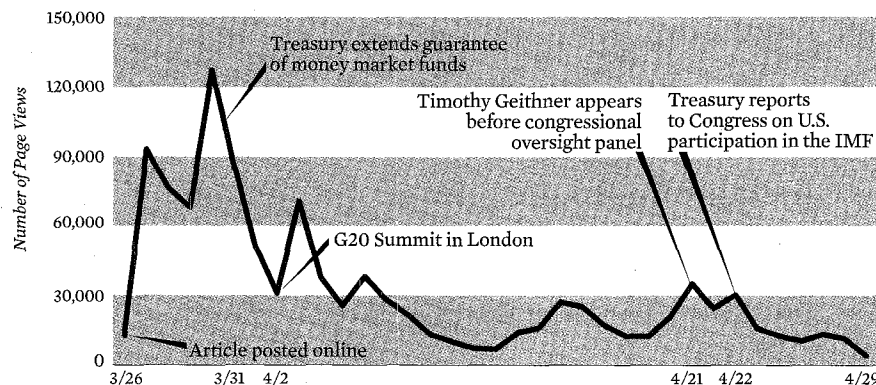
Corby Kummer replies:

I could prevaricate, but I had previous knowledge that should have prevented this preposterous error! My preternaturally humble apologies.

To submit a letter to the editor, please e-mail us at letters@theatlantic.com. Include your full name, city, and state.

Log

SIMON JOHNSON'S MAY ARTICLE ON THE FINANCE INDUSTRY HAS BEEN THE MOST POPULAR PIECE ON THEATLANTIC.COM THIS YEAR, WITH 1,100,497 VIEWS. HERE'S HOW RECENT EVENTS MAY HAVE AFFECTED ONLINE READERSHIP.



Why an Oil Company President Supports Cap & Trade



For Shell, the debate about whether climate change is real is over. As an energy-company executive, I see this as a clear call to action. In fundamental ways, this redefines what it means to be a good corporate citizen and a good businessman.

Inherent in the concept of cap and trade is the recognition that, along with the compelling need to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, we need energy... and more of it. Estimates are that we may well need to double energy production by the year 2050 if we are to support strong economies of developed countries like our own and account for improved standards of living in the developing world.

There is broad support in this nation for providing more of our own energy and transitioning as rapidly as possible to a green-energy, low-carbon economy. I support that wholeheartedly. But we have to be honest about what defines a realistic transition. To account for technology development, a realistic pace of new investment, protection of economies and the competitiveness of individual nations, we will need to produce energy from all sources, renewable and conventional, at significantly higher levels than today. To succeed, we will need to open up access to new sources of energy: wind on the great plains, sun wherever feasible, and oil and gas both onshore and on our outer continental shelf. Our economy, our security, and our future all depend on it.

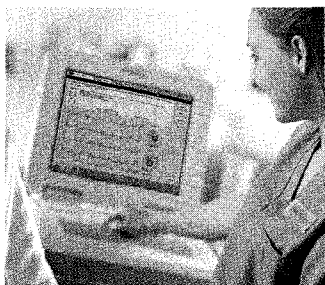
While the debate over climate change is over, the debate over doing something meaningful about it this year is not. Consensus for action is again giving way to individual interest. The framework for putting a price on carbon is needed now to begin the desired change in public and private investment. The application of this price on carbon must be sufficiently phased in to allow for progress on reducing CO₂ emissions at the lowest possible cost, while providing the necessary protection of certain competitive industries, our own economy, and consumers. Delay in making this decision is simply a delay in the ultimate transition.

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DISPATCHES

GOVERNMENT Mark Bowden wonders why so many pilots are crashing in the jungles of Colombia.

ENERGY Bonnie Tsui on a primitive instinct that might lower our electric bills

SPORT Colin Fleming considers Clemens vs. Schilling, a barroom baseball argument for the ages.

FINANCE Jeffrey Tayler visits a cash-only Communist backwater untroubled by the meltdown.

FOOD Corby Kummer meets the hardheaded realists who are kicking the crap out of school lunches.

TRAVEL Rachel Dickinson finds ghosts, hunting camps, and unsuspecting birds in Russia's Far East.

TECHNOLOGY Kevin Maney on how Internet rating schemes will automate your decisions, like it or not



The wreckage of the Cessna Caravan that crashed near La Esperanza, Colombia, on February 13, 2003, after its engine failed

GOVERNMENT

Flight Risk

WHEN A U.S. COMPANY IGNORED PILOT WARNINGS IN COLOMBIA, FOUR AMERICANS DIED, AND THREE WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE.

By Mark Bowden

LAST JULY, IN a clever rescue operation by Colombia's military, three American contractors held hostage by rebels in the Colombian jungle were freed, along with 12 others, including the French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt, kidnapped six years earlier while running for president of Colombia.

The three American contractors, who had been held since February 13, 2003, when their Cessna Caravan's

single engine failed and they crashed, told of their ordeal in *Out of Captivity*, a compelling account released earlier this year. The book caused a mild stir with its portrait of Betancourt, whose behavior while being hauled, bound and half-starved, through the jungle was apparently not all that might have been wished.

But one of the most disturbing parts of the three Americans' story was not in the book. Their Cessna was the first

of two to crash into the jungle early in 2003. (The pilot, Tom Janis, and a Colombian army sergeant named Luis Alcedes Cruz were executed at the site by rebels.) The second went down just over a month later, on March 25, killing all three crew members. Both planes were initially operated under an \$8.6 million Pentagon contract by California Microwave Systems of Maryland, a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman. And they were being flown despite repeated warnings by veteran pilots that the mission was running untenable risks.

Those pilots, Paul Hooper and Doug Cockes, predicted that the single-engine Caravan would be unsafe for high-tempo missions over the Andes Mountains. After program managers

AP PHOTO/EL TIEMPO



Three of the Americans who died: Tom Janis (top row, second from right), Ralph Ponticelli (top row, third from left), and Tommy Schmidt (first row, center)

on site in Bogotá dismissed their warnings, the pilots wrote letters in the fall of 2002 detailing their concerns to company officials, including Kent Kresa, then the chairman and CEO of Northrop Grumman. For their pains they were demoted, reprimanded, threatened with lawsuits, and, in their words, “pushed out” of the program shortly before their predictions came tragically true. They consider themselves fortunate. “The only reason those three Americans were captive on the ground for five years, and the reason why five of their colleagues are now dead, is the greed and incompetence of California Microwave and Northrop Grumman,” Hooper told me.

Two of the captives, Keith Stansell and Tom Howes, are now back to work for Northrop Grumman and did not respond to my interview request. The third, Marc Gonsalves, said that he joined the program too late to fully grasp the efforts the pilots had made to prevent his crash, but supports fully their version of events. The company itself declined to respond to my questions.

The small group of contractors, based at El Dorado International Airport in northwest Bogotá and operating under the name Southcom Reconnaissance System (SRS), flew deep into Colombia searching for drug-smuggling infrastructure. The pilots lived in apartments

in Bogotá and were paid well—up to \$150,000 annually. Most were former military, and all were used to working in exotic and dangerous spots, inhabiting the gray area between civilian life and the U.S. military/intelligence community. They were accustomed to managing risk.

All of the pilots knew that the Cessna Caravans, aircraft designed to carry about 10 passengers but modified for surveillance work, were ill-suited for the task at hand. El Dorado airport itself is more than 8,300 feet above sea level, where the air is so thin that the Caravan pilots could not take off with the extra weight of full fuel tanks. They typically left Bogotá with only enough gas to fly down to the Colombian military base at Larandia, where they topped up before setting off on missions that kept them airborne for four to five hours.

With precious few spots for emergency landings in the Andes, the pilots felt vulnerable flying with only one engine. “In a two-engine aircraft, you lose one and you shut it down, start troubleshooting, and have time to consider your options,” said Hooper.

But as veterans with long records of service, the pilots felt capable of safely flying the aircraft beyond what others considered its limits. “It’s called pushing your luck,” Hooper said. “We were stupid but lucky, and we knew it, but

experience counts for a lot in these situations. We were comfortable doing it, at first.”

Before September 11, 2001, their daily flights focused on drug interdiction. Congressional restrictions on the use of the American military in the decades-old Colombian civil war discouraged the pilots from trying to spot rebel forces—even though the rebels protected or ran many of the drug operations on the ground, and occasionally fired at the planes. But after September 11, the U.S. Embassy, which supervised the contract, interpreted the rules more loosely and began authorizing flights looking for rebel troop movements and targets.

“Actually, it wasn’t so much that the Embassy pushed,” Hooper said. “We had company guys over there every day, asking for more missions. These military contracts are competitive, and the company wanted the folks in charge to know we were up for anything.”

More and more often, the small unit was asked to fly higher and higher, and deeper and deeper into dangerous country. In the summer of 2002, after flying for more than a year, Cockes, then the unit’s lead pilot, stood up at a company all-hands meeting in Bogotá and expressed concern about this “mission creep,” warning that the single-engine Cessnas were no longer safe. He and the other pilots were willing to keep flying, he said, but wanted a commitment from the company that they would transition to twin-engine planes, which the aircraft supplier was willing to offer at no extra cost.

“We flew five or six days a week,” said one of the other pilots, Phill Bragg. “How far do you go out by yourself at night—300, 400 miles from Bogotá? We had been pulling it off, but they kept asking for more and more and more. So we said, ‘Fine, but we need to upgrade the platform.’ At some point, you need to hedge your bets.”

Cockes was relieved of his position as lead pilot two weeks later. He and three other pilots, Hooper, Bragg, and Tommy Schmidt (who would be killed in the second crash), subsequently received warning letters from Northrop Grumman and California Microwave Systems, threatening termination. Hooper and Cockes were upbraided for

FROM OUT OF CAPTIVITY



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Captive U.S. contractors Keith Stansell, Marc Gonsalves, and Tom Howes in July 2003, five years before their rescue by the Colombian military

having “a negative attitude and divisive tendencies.”

Cockes and Hooper wrote a six-page rebuttal letter and mailed it on November 14, 2002, to James G. Cassady, vice president of human resources for Northrop Grumman; Roslyn Smith, human-resources manager for Northrop Grumman and California Microwave; and Douglas L. Tait, the flight-operations manager for both companies. In that letter, they “strongly ask[ed]” that the company “replace the single engine Caravan with a King Air 300 series aircraft [a twin-engine Beechcraft] immediately to expand the safety margins associated with the SRS mission.”

They warned specifically of the danger of engine failure with the Cessnas, and included the following lines in bold and italicized type:

We are now telling you that this mission creep coupled with the SRS Management Team's attitude towards safe flight operations has made this mission very dangerous and creates unnecessary risk to the flight crews ... This is uniquely an issue of safety and a recommendation that will possibly save lives, limit the companies' exposure and enhance the mission's performance.

The pilots got no response to the letter. But Lawrence McCune, the site

manager, warned Cockes that Northrop Grumman was contemplating suing him personally for interfering with its “right to contract.” Hooper and Cockes—aware that the company was building a case to fire them, and worried in part about their reputations and opportunities for employment in the insular world of military-contracted intelligence—wrote directly on December 5, 2002, to Northrop CEO Kent Kresa, reiterating their safety concerns. Again, no response to their concerns.

Hooper and Cockes resigned in frustration in January 2003. Bragg was terminated at roughly the same time, “basically,” he says, “because they knew I was friendly and that I agreed with the other guys. I feel like I dodged a bullet, big-time.” All three pilots have found other work in their field, and fly missions as government contractors.

Six weeks after the second Cessna crash, with five men dead and three held captive, a new company took over the contract and began flying the surveillance missions over Colombia with twin-engine Beechcrafts. Northrop Grumman settled a lawsuit out of court with the families of three of the men who were killed. Kresa, meanwhile, was appointed interim chairman of General Motors. ■

Mark Bowden is an Atlantic national correspondent.

ENERGY

Greening With Envy

HOW KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S ELECTRIC BILL CAN HELP YOU TO CUT YOURS

By Bonnie Tsui

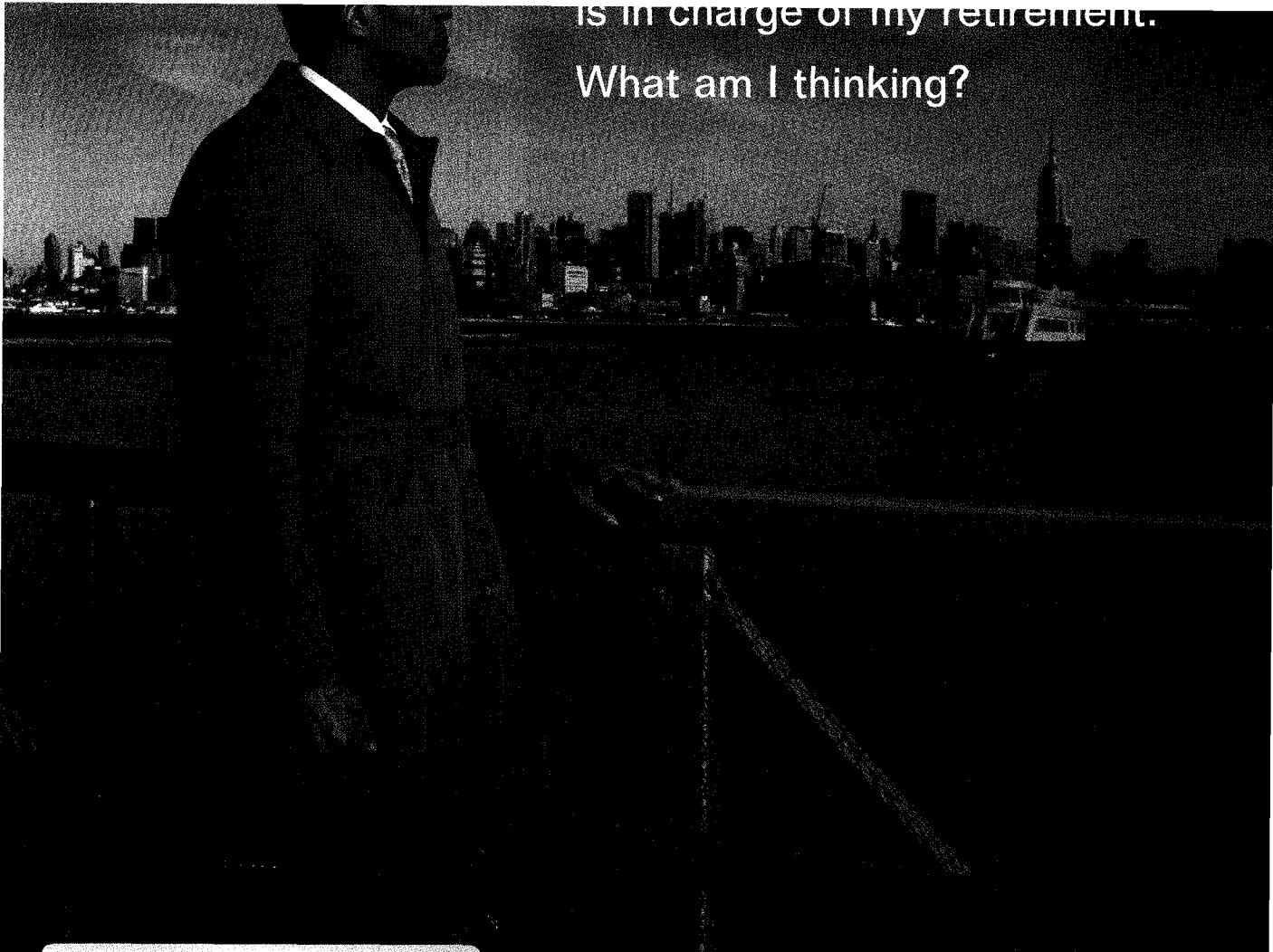
THREE DECADES AGO, Robert Cialdini was one of the first social psychologists to study what motivates people to take care of the environment. Since then, focusing on everyday settings that would have clear relevance for policy makers, he's investigated how we respond to everything from litter in a parking garage to public-service announcements about recycling.

A few years ago, Cialdini, a professor at Arizona State University, conducted a study in several Phoenix hotels comparing the effects of those ubiquitous hotel-bathroom placards that ask guests to reuse towels, testing four slightly different messages. The first sign had the traditional message, asking guests to “do it for the environment.” The second asked guests to “cooperate with the hotel” and “be our partner in this cause” (12 percent less effective than the first). The third stated that the majority of guests in the hotel reused towels at least once during their stay (18 percent more effective). The last message was even more specific: it said that the majority of guests “in this room” had reused their towels. It produced a 33 percent increase in response behavior over the traditional message.

When made aware of the social norm, subjects tended to adhere to it. “People are mostly oblivious to the impact of the decisions of those around them,” Cialdini told me. “But they are powerfully affected, without recognizing what it is that is influencing them.”

Cialdini terms this effect “social proof.” It's a primitive instinct, much like the impulse that drives insects to swarm or birds to flock; people take in information and respond, without being aware of why they act the way they do. “On some base level, it's survival recognition: these are the people who are most like me—we share the same circumstances,” Cialdini explained. He sees the power of this impulse less

AP PHOTO/GEORGE ENRIQUE BOYER



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as peer pressure and more as peer information.

Now Cialdini is applying that concept to energy consumption, with promising results. Positive Energy, a company that has drawn on his work (he's the chief scientist), has created software that assesses energy usage by neighborhood. Results are sent to consumers on behalf of their local utility, praising you with a row of smiley faces (you've used 58 percent less electricity than your neighbors this month!) or damning you with none (you used 39 percent more electricity than your neighbors in the past 12 months, and it cost you \$741 extra).

In Positive Energy's reports, a once-intangible bit of social information—how much energy you use relative to your neighbors—is made tangible. Now you can find out not just what people in the same city are doing, but what people in your neighborhood, living in the same-size houses, are doing—akin to discovering what guests in “your” hotel room have done, but also with customized tips on how to do better.

Keeping up with the Joneses may be cliché, but it seems to work: in Sacramento, where Positive Energy began its pilot program with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District

in 2008, people who received personalized “compared with your neighbors” data on their statements reduced their energy use by more than 2 percent over the course of a year. In energyspeak, a 2 percent reduction is huge; with the pilot sample of 35,000 homes, it's the equivalent of taking 700 homes off the grid. And the cost to the utility is minor: for every dollar a utility spends on a solar power plant, it produces 3 to 4 kilowatt-hours; for every dollar a utility spends on the energy reports, it saves 10 times that. By the end of 2009, Positive Energy will have contracts to deliver these reports to 1 million customers across the country, including in California, Washington, Minnesota, Illinois, and New York.

Many utilities have been trying for years to get their customers to be more energy-efficient, with limited success. Persuading consumers to switch to compact fluorescent lightbulbs—which serve the customer's self-interest—is one tactic, but it's hard to get consumers to act, says Val Jensen, who oversees the design and implementation of energy-efficiency programs for the Chicago utility Commonwealth Edison. Social proof is a way to do so, he has concluded. ComEd will begin sending out reports to its customers in August.

Cialdini hopes that what has been learned in the energy arena will be applied to the looming problem of water conservation—not only in the U.S., but globally. Something akin to the homeowner reports is a logical extension. And he notes that another aspect of behavioral science may influence policy makers trying to find a way to conserve water resources. “The very same unit of value—say, a gallon of water—has more impact on people if they think they're going to lose it than if they think they're going to gain it,” he explained. “Seizing on the concept of loss can be a motivational opportunity—one that will finally get people to act.” ■

Bonnie Tsui is the author of American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods.

SPORT

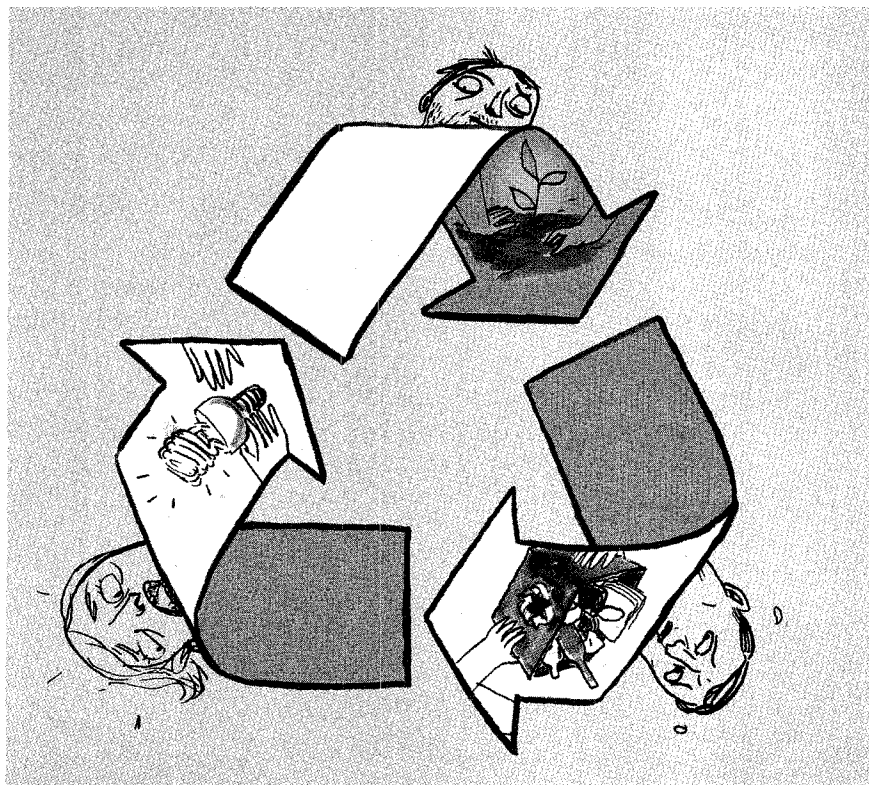
Pitchers' Duel

ROGER CLEMENS, CURT SCHILLING, AND HALL OF FAME STANDARDS IN THE STEROID ERA
By Colin Fleming

DICK BERARDINO HAS seen many pitchers come and go during his four decades with the Boston Red Sox, but few more memorably than Curt Schilling or Roger “The Rocket” Clemens. Berardino managed a raw, 20-year-old Schilling with the Class A Greensboro Hornets, a Red Sox farm team, in 1987, before Schilling was traded to the Baltimore Orioles the following year. A couple years later, as the Red Sox bullpen coach, Berardino got a prime view of Clemens, the team's franchise pitcher, whom he watched closely until 1996, when the Sox declined to resign the Rocket, convinced that he was spent at age 34.

Clemens, of course, would go on to win four Cy Young awards after that, and help the Yankees win the World Series in 1999 and 2000. In 2004, a 37-year-old Schilling would return to the Red Sox and help soften bad memories of Clemens's departure, delivering the team a World Series of its own, after 86 years in the wilderness, as Berardino, then 68, looked on.

Schilling announced his retirement this spring, and as the Hall of

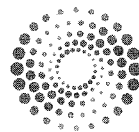




THE END OF THINK. THE BEGINNING OF KNOW.

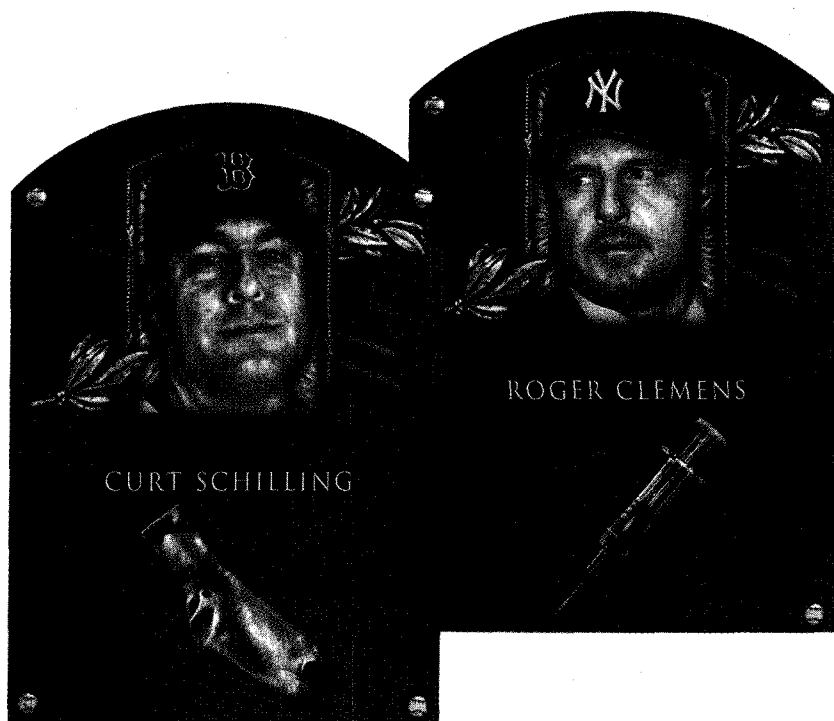
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KNOWLEDGE TO ACT



Fame prepares to induct its newest class, many observers are already looking ahead to 2013, when both he and Clemens will be on the ballot for the first time. Statistically, there is no comparison between the two. While both were right-handed power pitchers, strikeout kings who could handle heavy workloads year after year, Clemens won 354 games over his career, racking up a shelf-buckling seven Cy Youngs in the process; by the numbers, he was arguably the best pitcher of all time. Schilling's 216 wins, like most of his career statistics, are very good; still, by the numerology that has traditionally governed Hall of Fame voting, he is at best a marginal prospect.

But baseball numbers no longer inspire the same faith that they used to. Clemens's went out the window in the wake of credible allegations about his steroid use—believed to have begun after the Red Sox left him for dead. “Roger had this Texas mentality,” Berardino told me from his home in Waltham, Massachusetts. “More is better, bigger is better. I didn’t think he needed to work out like he did. After he went to the bullpen to warm up, it was like he had just pitched nine innings. ‘More is better. You gotta do what you gotta do.’ That was him.”

Schilling, when Berardino first met him, had a different outlook. “I knew Schilling was a gamer,” he told me. But “he was young, a little immature, high-maintenance. I pushed him a lot and I was hard on him. I know he didn’t like me a lot.” Clemens famously dressed down Schilling in 1991 during a chance weight-room encounter, telling the younger pitcher that he’d never amount to anything if he didn’t change his work habits. Schilling, who idolized Clemens at the time, counts the conversation as a turning point in his career.

“As he got older, [Schilling] became more and more a student of the game,” Berardino explained. He paid his dues in the weight room, but it was his mental preparation—meticulously charting opposing hitters, watching for tendencies he could exploit on the mound—that distinguished him. The “bloody sock” game, in which Schilling threw 99 pitches off a badly injured right ankle—beating the Yankees 4–2 and continuing the Red Sox’ improbable march to the 2004 World Series—was as much a testament to concentration and craft as it was a physical marvel.

“Everything is looked at differently now,” Berardino told me. As steroids have devalued statistical comparisons as measures of greatness, what remains

is something more organic and impressionistic. If Schilling makes the Hall, it will be on the back of his particular iconography, something Clemens’s career largely lacked—the bloody sock; an electrifying pitching performance in the deciding game of the 2001 World Series that lifted the upstart Arizona Diamondbacks over Clemens’s mighty Yankees; and an overall knack for post-season brilliance, for coming up big, again and again, in the biggest of games. Even Schilling’s body, thin-legged and pot-bellied, might be an asset of sorts in an era where heaped muscle is viewed with suspicion.

In 2007, when the charges against Clemens came out, Schilling publicly demanded that his erstwhile hero forfeit his last four Cy Youngs, and that baseball erase his 162 post-Red Sox wins, if Clemens couldn’t clear his name. Will Hall of Fame voters be of the same mind? “I wouldn’t be surprised if Schilling gets in and Clemens doesn’t,” Berardino told me. “But I hope it’s not true with Clemens, all the steroid talk. Because there was no need. He was a Hall of Famer, in my book, a long time ago.” ■

Colin Fleming is a writer based in Boston.

FINANCE

“What Crisis?”

WHY EUROPE’S POOREST COUNTRY IS A PARAGON OF FINANCIAL STABILITY

By Jeffrey Tayler

ON A SUN-DRENCHED spring day in Moldova’s capital of Chișinău, a laid-back, leafy city of about 785,000 built atop seven hills, I strolled down the central boulevard, Stefan Cel Mare, talking with my friend and guide, whom I’ll here call Roman, a trim fellow in his mid-40s. The global economic crisis was on everyone’s lips in Moscow (where I live, and where it is known succinctly as the *kreezis*), so I asked Roman about it, Russian-style, without adjectives.

He shot me a puzzled look. “What crisis?”

“The global financial crisis!”

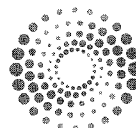
“Oh, that. I scratch my head and try to remember it. It’s something we see



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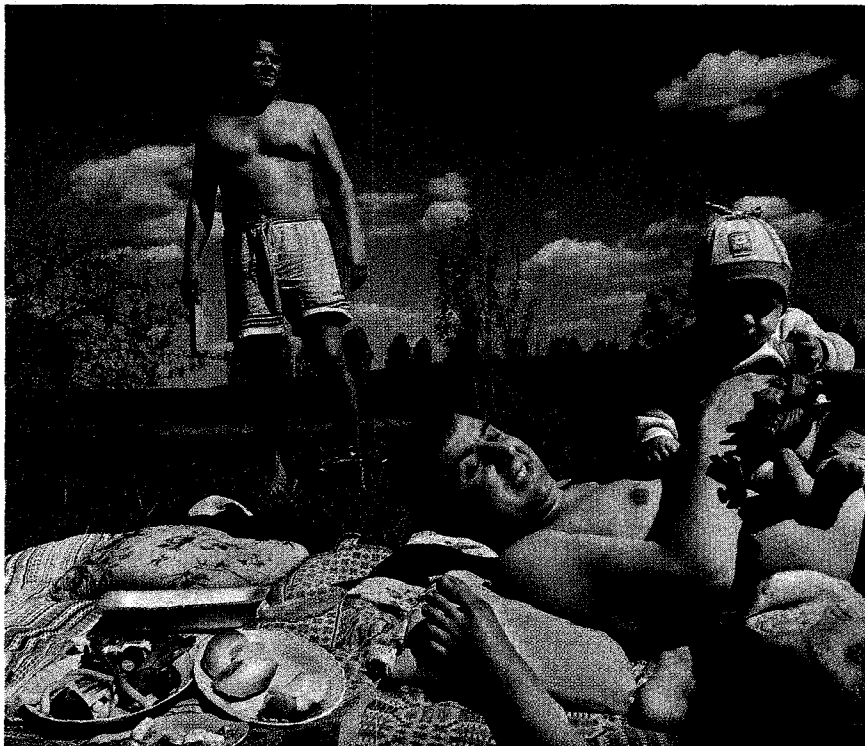
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KNOWLEDGE TO ACT



The good life in Moldova, without credit cards

on TV. We perceive it as distant from us.”

Roiled by recent political tensions, beset by a long-standing separatist conflict over its eastern territory of Transnistria, dependent on Russia to supply energy and import its wines and agricultural produce, Europe’s poorest (and only Communist) country would appear to have nothing at all to boast of.

Except that it has flat-out beat the United States, the United Kingdom, and most other capitalist titans at their own market game. Well, at least in a way. Earlier this year, *The Banker*, a respected British financial journal, ranked Moldova fifth out of 184 countries for economic stability in recession times, according to the 25 indicators used to compile its World Financial Health Index for 2009. Moldovans complained to me about corruption, the ruling Communists, and the president, but the *kreezis* did not come up in conversation unless I mentioned it.

Moldova lacks not only the energy reserves that characterize three of the four countries ahead of it on the index (Norway, Russia, and Kuwait), but also most of the attributes now associated with developed (read:

leveraged) economies: among others, the prevalence of credit, state debt and debt interest payments, and domestic bank loans. The Moldovan government largely lives within its (admittedly limited) means; Moldovan banks, on the whole, exhibit what a year ago would have been diagnosed as risible, out-of-touch conservatism, lending modestly (35 percent of GDP, as compared with 230 percent in the United States) and maintaining a high capital-to-assets ratio. In fact, the country hardly has a banking or financial sector at all.

“We never think of going to the bank for a loan or using a credit card,” Roman told me. “We operate on a cash-only system here.”

Cash-only is a matter of not just choice but tradition for Roman and other Moldovans. Taking on debt is still fraught with taboo. Still reigning are old-fashioned ideas of solvency and personal pride, and a pragmatic way of dealing with money born of decades of penurious scarcity. Moreover, since the fall of the U.S.S.R., scandals involving banks, stock fraud, and Ponzi schemes have periodically made the news. All of which confirms the trust people place in cash savings (mostly in dollars and euros), which they usually keep hidden

in their homes, under the proverbial mattress.

Roman affirmed this. “I keep all the money I have in a drawer. What I have is mine. We spend only what we have. And so I sleep well at night.”

Not that there is little to buy in Chişinău. Moldova’s current leadership may be Communist, but all the temptations of a capitalist consumer society abound. We passed shop windows chock-full of clothes, food, and electronics. Commercial malls such as Sun City and Jumbo boasted the same sort of well-stocked stores one might see in the West, with additional, post-Soviet touches like BMWs for sale in the lobbies and casinos on the upper floors. There was no shortage of shoppers, though occasionally attendants complained to me that business was down. Notably few store windows displayed credit-card logos; buyers had to pay in cash.

The one speculative operation most people engage in involves buying dollars and euros as hedges against the anemic local tender, the Moldovan *leu*. On almost every street corner in the city center stands a booth marked SCHIMB VALUTAR (currency exchange).

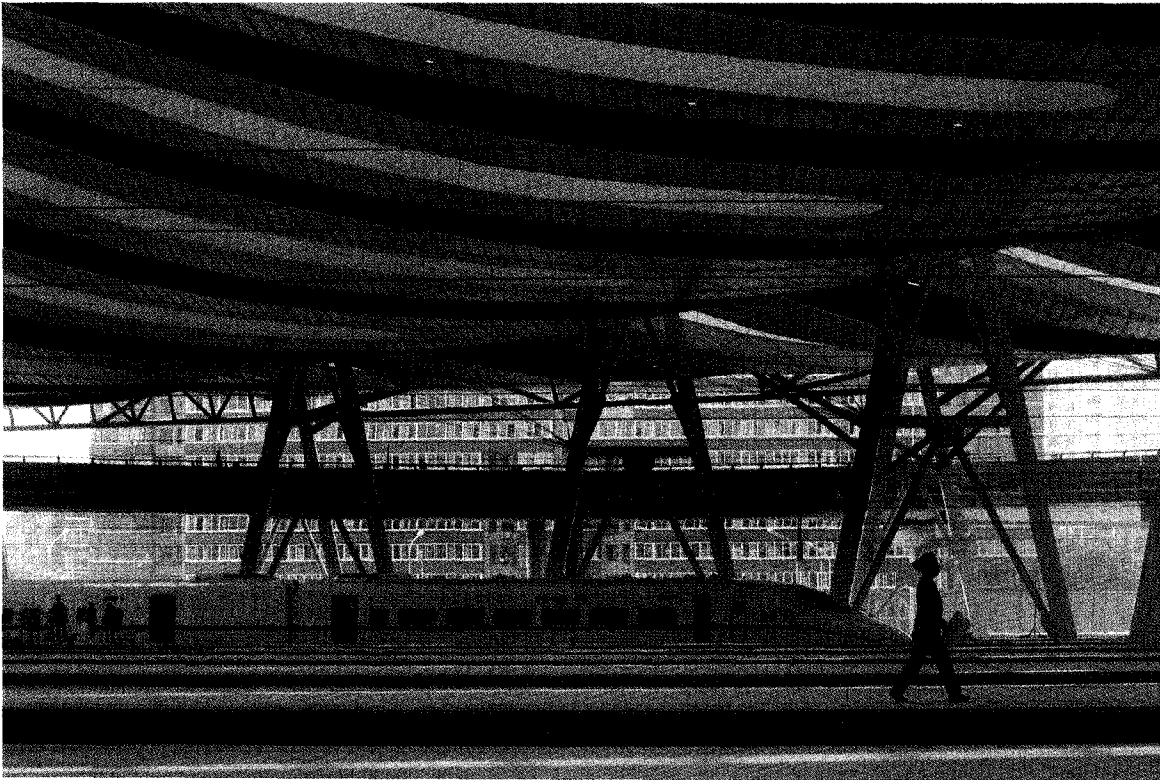
Roman was dressed in stylish Western jeans and a denim jacket. He drives a Ford and, with his wife, owns a three-bedroom apartment (for which they paid cash) in the fashionable district around Chişinău’s version of the Arc de Triomphe, the Holy Gates. He represents, in sum, the debt-free middle class that arose across the former Soviet Union roughly during the time the credit boom was sweeping much of the West.

I told Roman about Moldova’s ranking in *The Banker*, and his eyes lit up with surprise. But when I described the widespread suffering the crisis was causing in the United States, he grew somber.

“I feel sorry for people in the West,” he said. “Their financial system worked well for decades, and now it’s collapsed. You know, I feel *blessed* to have been born here.”

Blessed to have been born in Moldova? Few would have uttered such words a year ago. Now, sadly, they make sense. ■

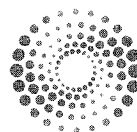
Jeffrey Tayler is an Atlantic contributing editor.



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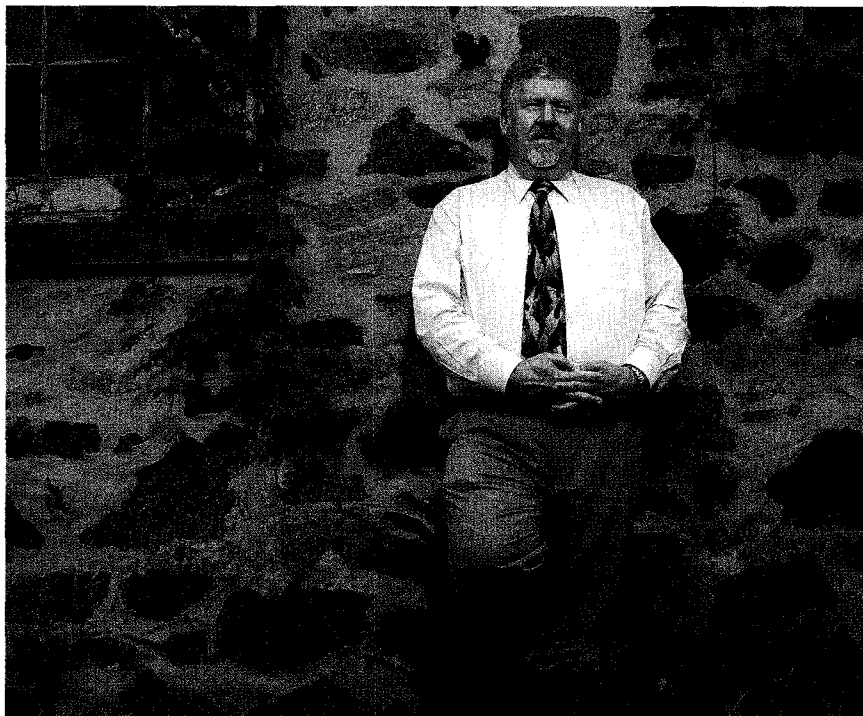
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KNOWLEDGE TO ACT



FOOD

Fixing Lunch

TONY GERACI IS DETERMINED TO GET HEALTHY FOOD TO THE KIDS IN BALTIMORE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

By Corby Kummer

TONY GERACI, the food-service director for Baltimore's public schools, doesn't look like a reformer. He's no nutritionist or lunch lady. He's a stocky, blunt guy who grew up in the projects of New Orleans—"I know what welfare cheese tastes like"—and faced weight problems and diabetes. He owned and operated six successful restaurants before working as a food broker for 14 years. He was a professional race-car driver. Yet Geraci, 52, is one of several go-ahead national leaders whose names always come up at conferences on childhood obesity and school nutrition when charismatic dreamers have been dismissed and everyone is in despair over how to get children, especially poor children, to eat better food.

It's his business experience, Geraci told me when I recently met him, that helps him push through the kinds of changes he made, and made fast, as soon as he got to Baltimore last summer.

Vending machines? They were already out of all but the high schools, and he "got rid of the crap food" in the

ones that were left. "You're in charge of what's in them," he said, to my surprise, as so many of his colleagues had told me that schools are addicted to their share of the profits. All it takes, he said, is the backing of the school board and its "wellness policy," which every district must now write to get federal meals funding. Geraci redirected the profits away from the principals and coaches who generally get them and toward food programs—something he highly recommends, even if it takes some wrestling.

In the Baltimore schools that, like most of the schools in this country, have nothing more than heat-and-serve kitchens, he stocked vending machines with box lunches that met the wellness policy's nutritional requirements. Students who qualify for food assistance swipe a card, and others pay the rate set by the school board. This encourages more students to actually eat school food. It is the number of students who do—instead of buying, say, chips and soda from vending machines, or "à la carte" burgers and fries from cafeteria fast-food kiosks—that determines how

much money the government will give schools for meals.

Local produce? His colleagues tell me they can never find enough, transport it, or beat the price of commodity food. They don't look hard enough, Geraci told me. He found farmers who would sell him, and deliver, all the peaches they could grow—for less than he would pay for commodity peaches packed in syrup. Even commodity apples are more expensive than small ones from local farms. (Small potatoes, too, Dorothy Brayley, of Kids First, in Rhode Island, told me—as long as they're white, unlike "chic" red ones.)

Shortly after he arrived, Geraci found a long-disused city-owned orphanage on 33 acres, hired a farm manager, and turned it into an organic farm run by schoolchildren. The project keeps growing, and Geraci keeps finding money to run it—and to build central kitchens for the school system's 80,000 students. "You have to hustle," he says.

Other food directors aren't taking no for an answer either, and are quietly making real progress. Jean Ronnei uses a central kitchen to make from-scratch meals for the 40,000 students in the St. Paul, Minnesota, school system, and removed à la carte junk food. Her program runs in the black, and her success was a large part of an analysis by economists at the University of Minnesota that came to a contrarian conclusion: "Healthier school meals are possible without higher government spending to fund nutrition education programs or increased reimbursement rates." Labor costs may go up, but only initially—and food costs, as Geraci has proven with local food, go down.

What unites these local leaders is not grand ideology but hardheaded realism about maneuvering through chronically underfunded systems. Kelly Erwin, head of the Massachusetts Farm to School Project, told me how Donna Lombardi, a school nutrition director in Worcester, Massachusetts, a city hard hit by the recession, is getting sugary drinks out of her schools' vending machines. Lombardi "hit roadblocks," Erwin said. "She's taking them down, one at a time." ■

Corby Kummer is an Atlantic senior editor and the curator of the food channel on theatlantic.com.

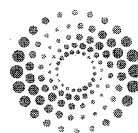
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CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES.

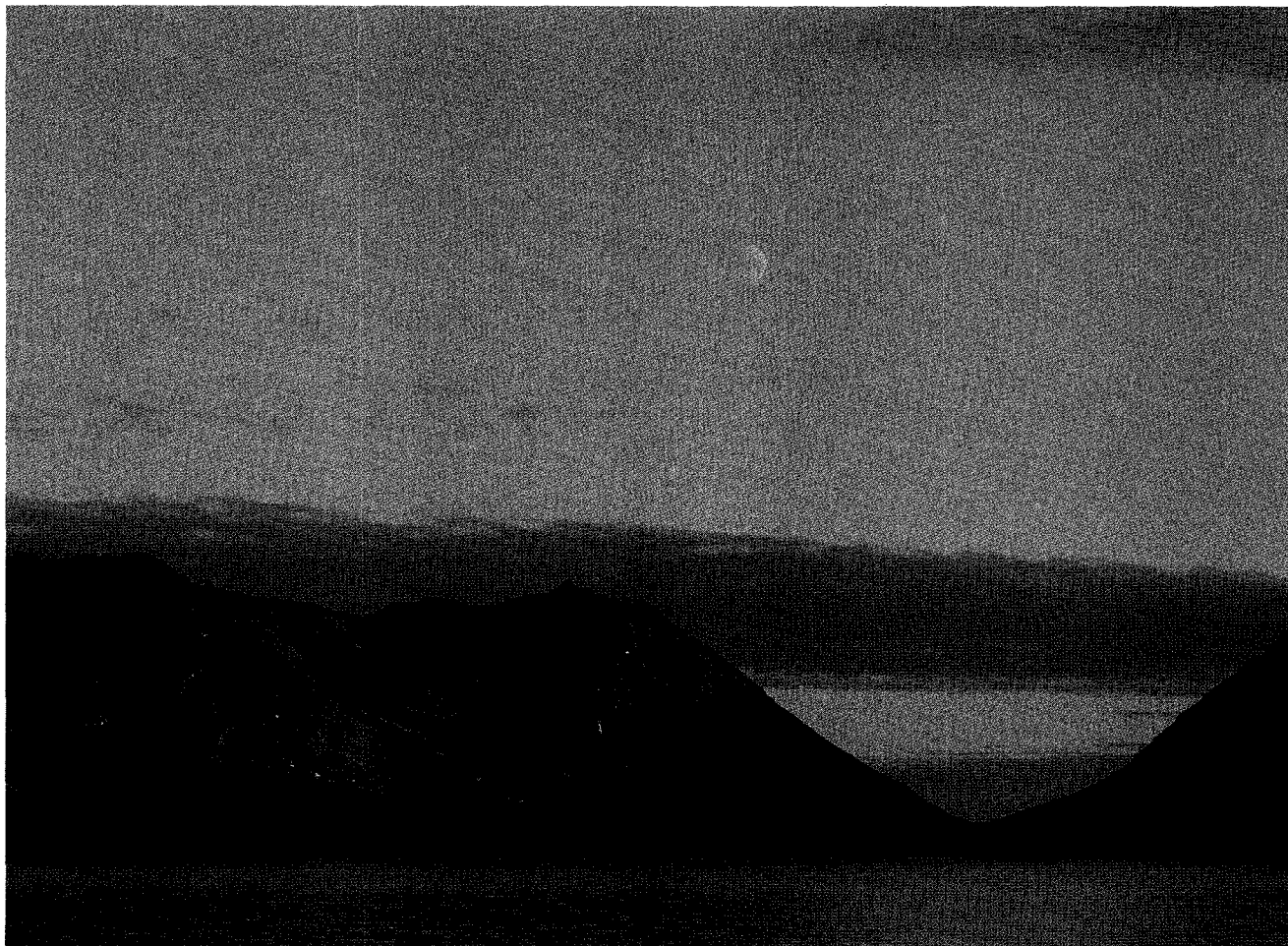
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KNOWLEDGE TO ACT



The desolate beauty of the Kamchatka coast, near midnight in mid-July

TRAVEL

At Land's End

IN RUSSIA'S VAST FAR EAST, MOST OF THE PEOPLE ARE GONE,
BUT THE BIRDS ARE ABUNDANT.

By Rachel Dickinson

THE SHIP MADE its way toward the Russian port city of Provideniya, the water smooth as glass. On one side of the fjord, abandoned low-slung gray apartment buildings almost blended in with the low hills. On the other side, someone had painted many of the occupied buildings in blazing colors: pink, yellow, and minty green—a jarring sight in the washed-out landscape.

This is the part of Russia that Sarah Palin could see if she had super-binocular powers; it lies just across the Bering Strait from Alaska.

Russia's Far Eastern Federal District is huge—2.4 million square miles,

roughly twice the size of India—and takes up one-third of the country, but only 6.7 million people populate that vast space. (The district's biggest city is Vladivostok—best known for being the last stop on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and home to the Russian Pacific fleet.) Provideniya was once a thriving military town with a population as high as 10,000; today the population is about 2,000. Most of the ethnic Russians have left, ceding the city to the region's indigenous people. Now the government is struggling to stem the tide of people leaving the desolate Far East.

It was precisely this lack of people that brought me here.

I came to see the birds. Because there

are few humans—fewer than three per square mile—the birds of the Russian Far East are, well, fairly unsuspicious. And although birders can see some of these Russian species in Alaska, in the Aleutians or in a place like Gambell on St. Lawrence Island (a few dozen birders go there every year to see birds that have been blown across the Bering Strait), when you walk across the tundra and come upon a little Asian songbird, you know you're seeing it in the very same habitat where it has existed for thousands of years. The experience is exhilarating.

We sailed south from Provideniya in the choppy waters of the Bering Sea, toward the Kamchatka Peninsula, intent on looking for birds along the coast. Although it was mid-July, the air temperature was only in the 30s, and the sea spray was joined by spitting rain. As the boat neared an island, birds began taking off, flying in circles near the cliffs. More and more birds lifted

"I never thought
it could happen
to me.
A heart attack at 53."

~Steve A.
New York, NY
Heart attack: 1/9/2008



"I had been feeling fine. But turns out my cholesterol and other risk factors* increased my chance of a heart attack. Now I trust my heart to Lipitor. Talk to your doctor about your risk and about Lipitor."

- Adding Lipitor may help, when diet and exercise are not enough. Unlike some other cholesterol-lowering medications, Lipitor is FDA-approved to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in patients with several common risk factors, including family history, high blood pressure, low good cholesterol, age and smoking.
- Lipitor has been extensively studied with over 16 years of research. And Lipitor is backed by 400 ongoing or completed clinical studies.

*Patient's risk factors include age, gender, smoking, and high blood pressure.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: LIPITOR is a prescription drug. It is used in patients with multiple risk factors for heart disease such as family history, high blood pressure, age, low HDL ('good' cholesterol) or smoking to reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke and certain kinds of heart surgeries. When diet and exercise alone are not enough, LIPITOR is used along with a low-fat diet and exercise to lower cholesterol.

LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you

take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

LIPITOR is one of many cholesterol-lowering treatment options that you and your doctor can consider.

Please see additional important information on next page.



Have a heart to heart with your doctor about your risk. And about Lipitor.
Call 1-888-LIPITOR (1-888-547-4867) or visit www.lipitor.com/steve

*You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.*

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IMPORTANT FACTS



LIPITOR
atorvastatin calcium
tablets

(LIP-ih-tore)

LOWERING YOUR HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol is more than just a number, it's a risk factor that should not be ignored. If your doctor said you have high cholesterol, you may be at an increased risk for heart attack. But the good news is, you can take steps to lower your cholesterol.

With the help of your doctor and a cholesterol-lowering medicine like LIPITOR, along with diet and exercise, you could be on your way to lowering your cholesterol.

Ready to start eating right and exercising more? Talk to your doctor and visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.

WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

BEFORE YOU START LIPITOR

Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
- If you drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- If you have diabetes or kidney problems
- If you have a thyroid problem

ABOUT LIPITOR

LIPITOR is a prescription medicine. Along with diet and exercise, it lowers "bad" cholesterol in your blood. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).

LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

- age, smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C, heart disease in the family, *or*
- diabetes with risk factor such as eye problems, kidney problems, smoking, or high blood pressure

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems.** Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Constipation
- Diarrhea, gas
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Rash
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves.

Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

HOW TO TAKE LIPITOR

Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
- Try to eat heart-healthy foods while you take LIPITOR.
- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
- Talk to your pharmacist.
- Go to www.lipitor.com or call 1-888-LIPITOR.

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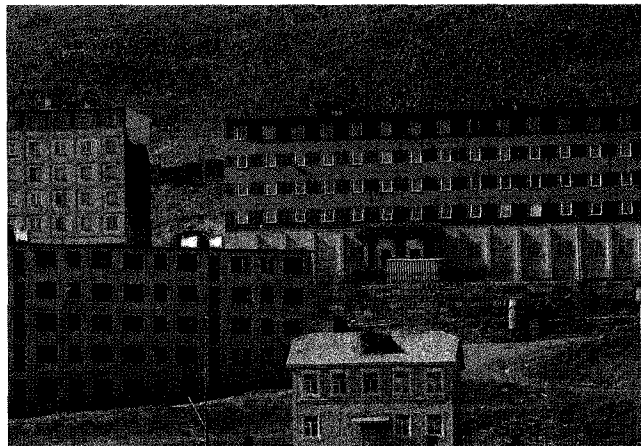
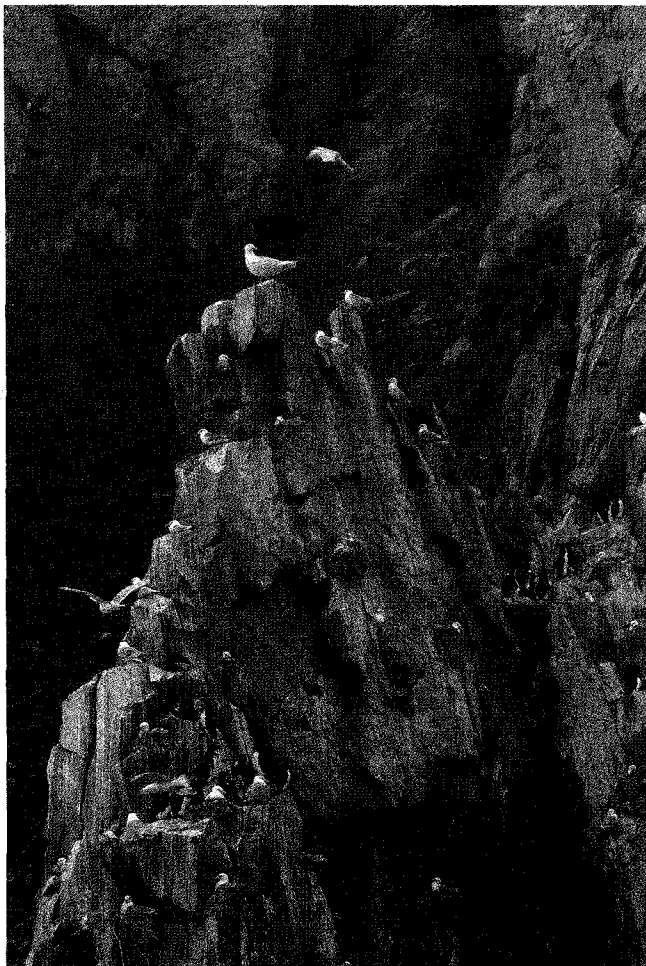
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Kittiwakes and common murrelets nesting on a sea stack; Provideniya's bright buildings; and walrus in the cold Chukchi Sea

from the land, the ruckus they made growing into a din. Dainty black-legged kittiwakes and glaucous gulls flew in swirling clouds overhead while black-and-white thick-billed and common murrelets skimmed low across the water, looking like tuxedo-clad squadrons on maneuvers. Thousands of murrelets stood on narrow ledges, faces to the wall, each protecting its one egg. Occasionally we'd spy small groups of horned puffins near their nests on the cliffs, or a tufted puffin, with its clownlike face and long feathers swept back in a coif as if the bird were a vain maestro.

Suddenly, one of the glaucous gulls—a huge white-and-gray predatory bird—snatched a young murre from a ledge, swallowing it whole. In the commotion, the egg of another murre fell and smashed on the rocks below. Murrelets lay one egg every summer; if something happens to that egg or that chick, the chances of laying another egg the same year are slim.

It's easy to delude yourself into thinking you're completely alone with nature in the wild Bering Sea, but every so often, around a bend, a ghostly abandoned Soviet-era building rises from the cliffs. We passed a weather station high on a hillside, and a derelict fox farm, with its concrete barn and rows of collapsing cages that used to hold the animals, raised for their fur.

One foggy morning we went ashore. On the beach, ravens were picking at the carcass of a young gray whale. Huge ribs and jawbones were scattered everywhere. As we walked on the tundra beyond the beach, I almost fell into a small circular hole, and then realized I was surrounded by low, hummock-like food-storage shelters made of whale ribs covered with sod. We had come across a hunting camp where Yupiks have been butchering their massive catch for hundreds of years.

A distant, loud *kakakakak* sound broke the quiet. As we strained to see

through the heavy mist, a large bird—a sandhill crane—dropped over the top of a hill and glided in, long legs trailing, to land at the edge of a small lake in front of us. The crane cried again, *kakakakak*. An answer came from across the water. Calling back and forth, the gray beauties flew toward each other, meeting above the water then turning and flying in tandem over a nearby hill. It began to rain as we slogged back toward the boat; at my feet were dainty, miniaturized dogwoods, rhododendrons, and azaleas growing in the spongy sod. I thought about the cranes and their balletic flight, and the ravens pecking away at the whale carcass, and how the beauty and desolation of the Russian Far East converges in this spot on the tundra, at the edge of the frigid Bering Sea. ■

*Rachel Dickinson's most recent book, published in May, is *Falconer on the Edge: A Man, His Birds, and the Vanishing Landscape of the American West*.*



TECHNOLOGY

The Rating Game

THE SPREAD OF RATINGS SYSTEMS IS FREEING CONSUMERS TO FOCUS ON THE DECISIONS THAT MATTER.

By Kevin Maney

RICH BARTON, A superstar of the Internet era, settles across from me in a coffee shop in Centreville, Virginia, looking like a 1950s sitcom dad—glasses, preppy haircut, V-neck sweater. He built Expedia in the 1990s, co-founded the real-estate site Zillow in 2005, and most recently launched Glassdoor.com, which lets employees grade their workplaces for the public to see. When I wonder what Barton might get into next, he leans forward to tell me his investment mantra: “If it can be rated, it will be rated,” he says.

Sounds so absurdly evident, yet it’s so big. Customers rate hotels and restaurants on Web sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp. College students dive into RateMyProfessors.com before signing up for courses. Readers rate books on Amazon.com. In 2007, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that about one-third of all American Internet users rated something online.

But rating is about to spread like a pandemic. Everything—everyone—will get rated by Web users. You. Me. The dentist. All the hairstylists in town. The sermons in every place of worship. Youth soccer coaches. Lunch meats. Wine. The

fact is, on tomorrow’s Internet, everyone will know if you’re a dog.

Web companies will drive a lot of the activity, using it to make money. Zillow just built a way to rate mortgage brokers alongside its information about housing prices, hoping to draw more house shoppers, who are targets for ads from Home Depot and Snapper lawn mowers. In other cases, online ratings will be less about business and will arise out of need or passion. Tom Seery says he started RealSelf.com to rate plastic surgeries, after his wife found it easier to get information about hotel towels than about a \$2,000 laser skin treatment.

The proliferation in ratings is already changing societal dynamics. Look at its impact on the relationship between doctors and patients. According to Pew, 47 percent of Internet users now search online for information about doctors. Ratings, though still just a trickle, are increasingly part of that information. Now, if a medical practice routinely leaves patients in the waiting room for two hours—or leaves a spare scalpel in someone’s abdomen—the whole world will know. The power shift ticks off doctors so much, about 2,000 have turned to a company called Medical Justice,

which offers advice about using legal and bullying tactics to stop doctor ratings. (Predictably, lawyers have sued—so far unsuccessfully—to shut down Avvo, a lawyer-rating site.)

Today’s ratings are only the raw material for what’s to come. Rearden Commerce’s Web-based personal assistant already helps employees in corporations like ConAgra make travel plans, by quizzing them about their age, income, job, family situation, lifestyle, and preferences like favorite types of restaurants. (JPMorgan Chase will roll out a Rearden-based travel adviser to its credit-card customers later this year.) The next step, says Rearden CEO Patrick Grady, is to pull in ratings from all over the Web and mash them up with anonymous information from Rearden users. Then, if a beef-loving cat-litter salesman is traveling to Dallas, the system can recommend a top-rated steak house where other cat-litter reps have had luck taking pet-shop owners to close deals.

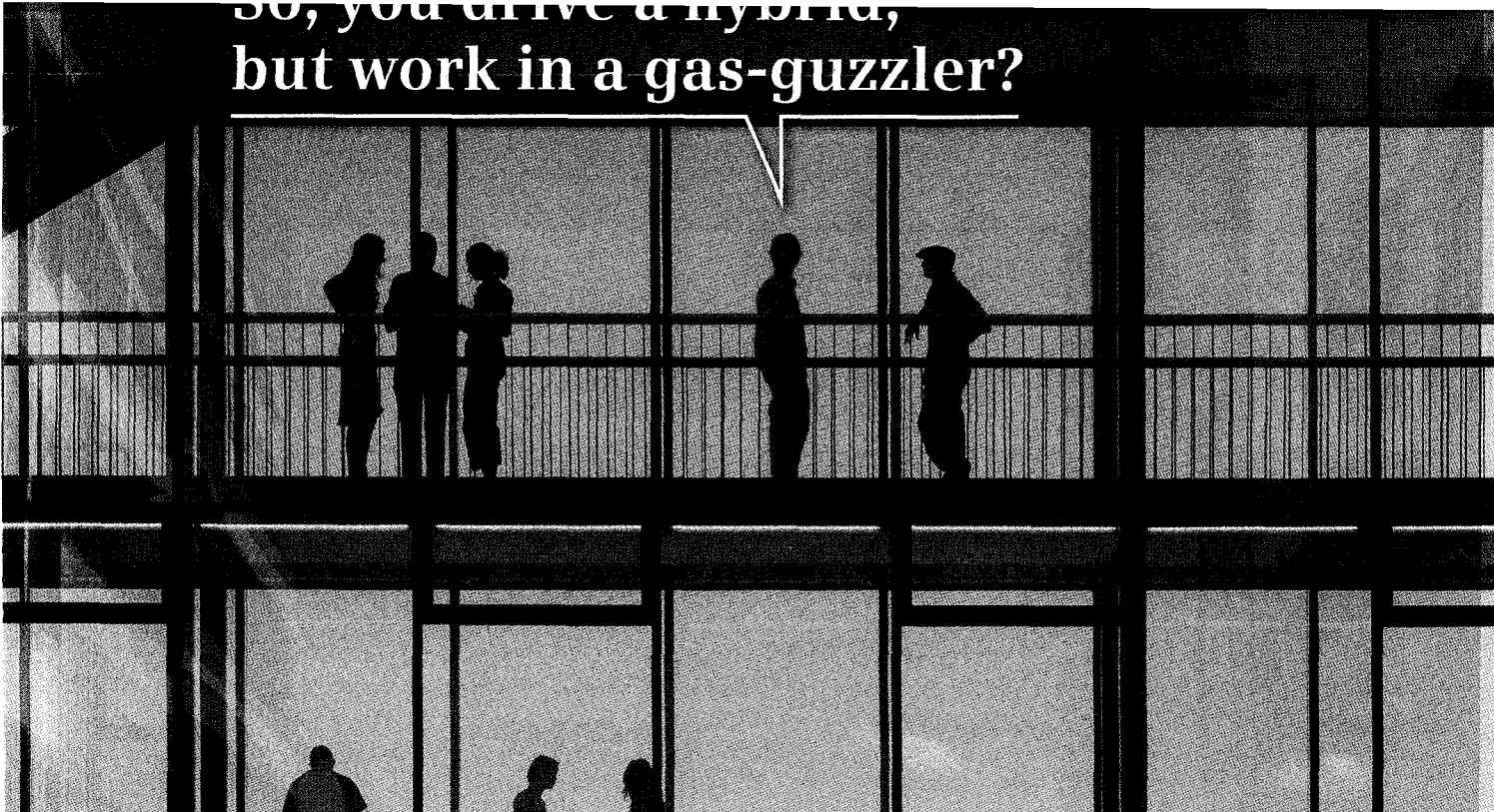
“You’ll see more passive ratings turned into active suggestions by software that runs behind these sites,” Rich Barton says. “It’s a hard problem to get right, but it will be super-compelling.”

But the ratings game still faces, well, a few challenges. I talked to Dartmouth about RateMyProfessors, and was told that the site’s ratings often don’t match Dartmouth’s more rigorous survey results, in part because contributors to RateMyProfessors score teachers on some nontraditional criteria—like “hotness” and “easiness.” Yelp has been accused of not being transparent about how it filters ratings and reviews; anonymous bad ratings might come from the rated business’s competitors.

In theory, though, the more technology can help with decisions, the better life will be. Guided by ratings and personalized suggestions, I’ll more likely end up doing things I enjoy and using professionals who do their jobs well. On the other end, I won’t waste so much time or money trying to find the right kickboxing class or financial adviser. I can then devote my brain cells to higher-level problems the Web can’t yet solve, like how to get my teenagers to clean their rooms. ■

Kevin Maney is the author of *Trade-Off: Why Some Things Catch On, and Others Don’t*.

JASON SCHNEIDER



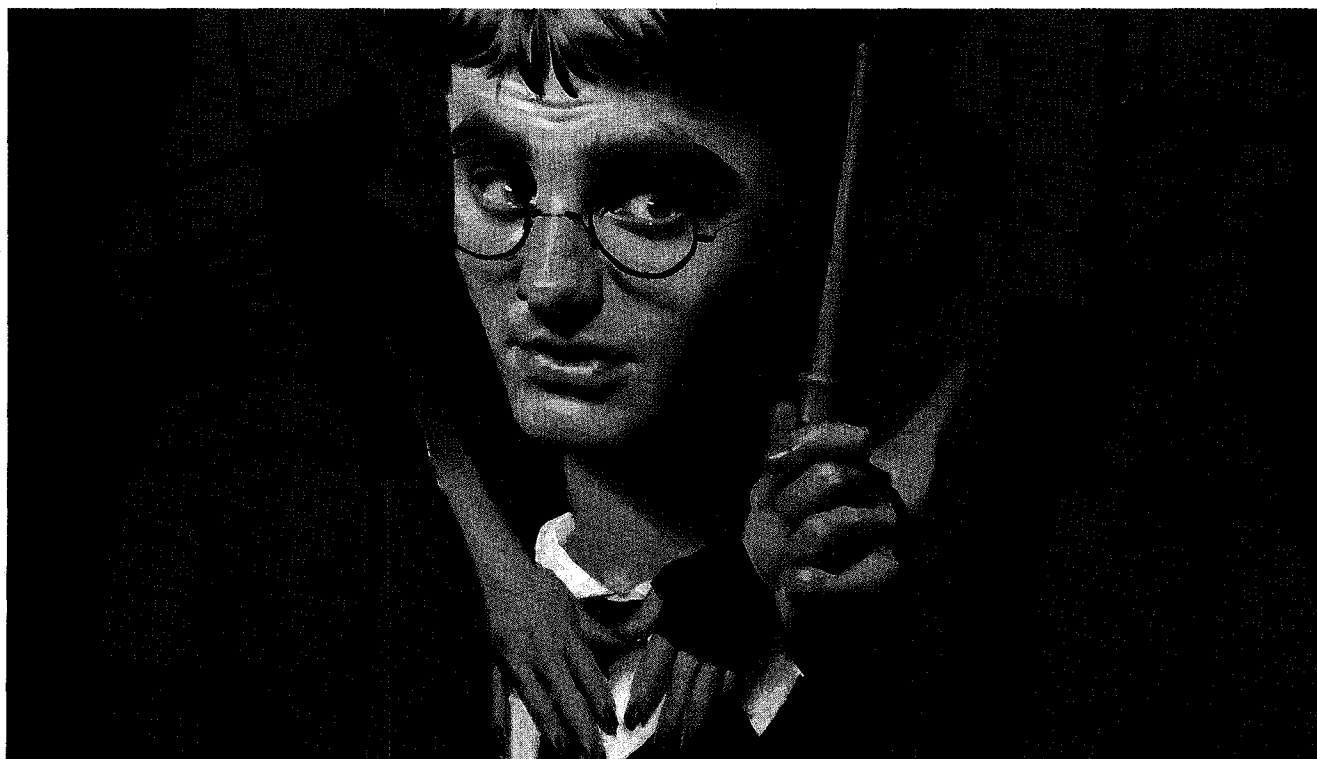
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Sex and the Single Wizard

The peculiar challenge of adapting *Harry Potter* for the screen

By James Parker

PERSONALLY SPEAKING, my difficulty with Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry has always been the girls. Because at my elite British boarding school, you understand, there were no girls; gray cloisters and shadowy halls, yes, and ringing bells, and triangles of cold toast at breakfast, but no girls. When Matron applied the anti-headlice ointment, combing up our schoolboy mops into reeking little pompadours—no girls. When fainting swept the school like some hot new dance, and we slumped from our pews in morning chapel—no girls!

At Hogwarts, however, the remote and castellated establishment where Harry Potter pursues his studies, there

are girls everywhere: eccentric girls, stalwart girls, mean girls, ghost girls who live in the toilet, girls you get crushes on, girls you can kiss ... Is this how a sorcerer is made? By shaking a leg at the school dance? Shouldn't his education be more like mine—which is to say, a lonely flare of unrequited hormones?

Perhaps, perhaps. But then, J.K. Rowling, bazillionaire author of the *Harry Potter* series, didn't write the books for me. And to her global readership, a girl-less Harry Potter, who waves his wand in an erotic vacuum, is no Harry Potter at all. The movie adaptations of her work have served as a sort of time-lapse study

of puberty: we've seen Harry (played by Daniel Radcliffe) sprout up from a round-faced minor, blinking through the fumes of his latest supernatural act, into a bony young man with the pallor and intensity of an English First World War poet. He's grown moody, complicated, agonized even. And the closer he gets to sex, the trickier things become. *Harry Potter and the Order*

of the Phoenix, released in 2007, almost finished him off, as his hesitant courtship of a fellow Hogwarts student (the demure Cho Chang) proceeded simultaneously with the onslaughts of a rampant snakelike essence from within his own brain. "Look at me!" he

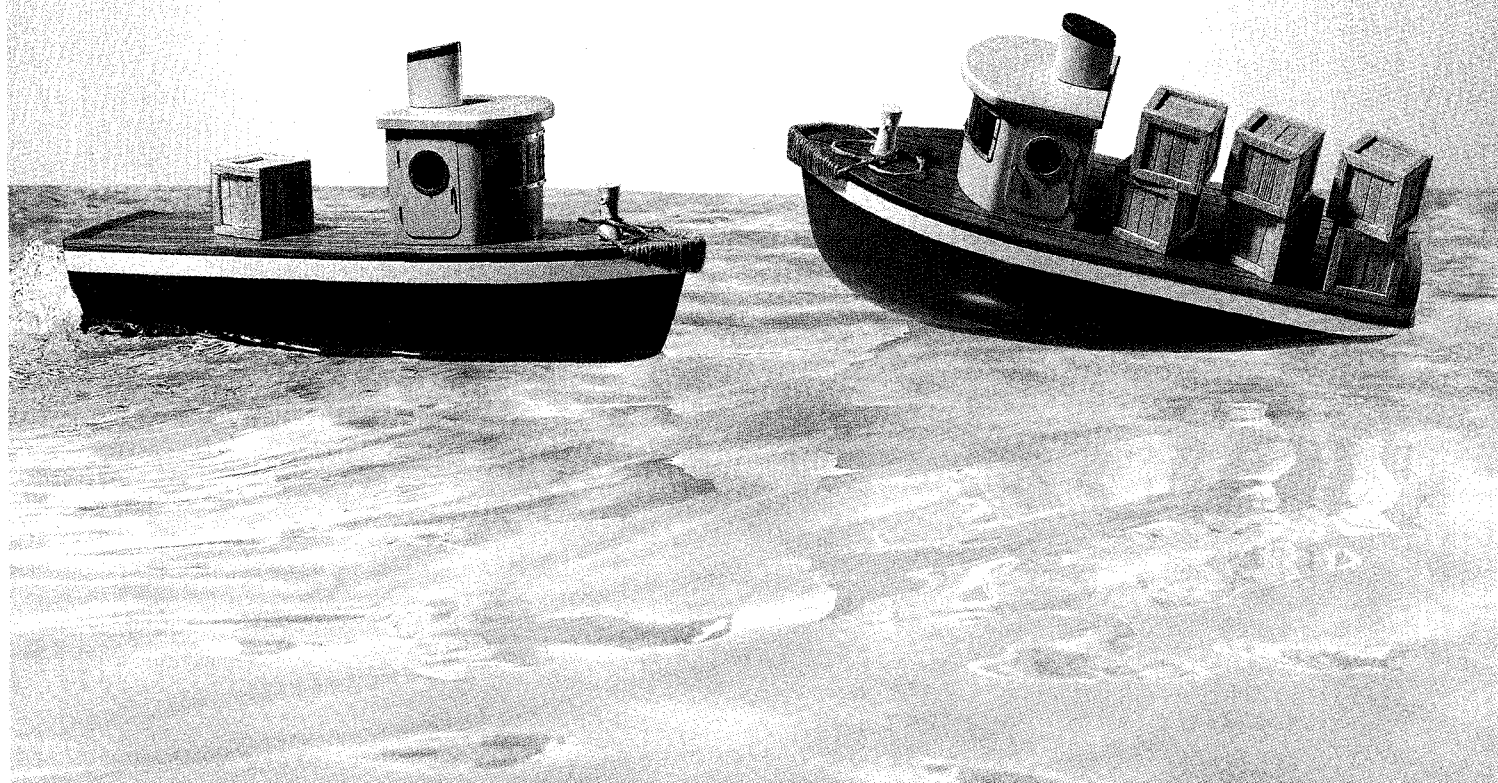
MORE ONLINE

James Parker's commentary on Harry Potter: www.theatlantic.com/potter
THEATLANTIC.COM

DANIEL ADEL

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implored the great mage Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts. "What's happening to me?!"

How to handle this blend of teen drama and high fantasy is part of the peculiar challenge that Rowling's work has posed to filmmakers. (This July sees the release of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the sixth and penultimate movie in the series; the last one, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, will be a two-parter, with its first installment scheduled for late 2010.) Rich as they are in basilisks and Triwizard Tournaments, her books advance, narratively, at an absolute crawl. There's the paralyzing obsession with bureaucracy, for instance: hearings, edicts, exams, disqualifications, issues of procedure, administrative reversals ... Can you think of another children's story-cycle that features so many frigging committees? Add to this Rowling's perpetual, enveloping burble of talk, as Harry and his chums puzzle earnestly through the latest goings-on, and you have a sense of pacing that is more *Thirtysomething* than *Lord of the Rings*. The younger reader—for whom reality actually moves like this, in close whorls of micro-plot—is delighted. The adult, less so; which

father or mother, reading Rowling aloud to small, pricked ears, hasn't sighed at the onset of another four-page debriefing of Harry by Hermione and/or Ron?

Attempts to filmically infuse this material with a Tolkien-esque sweep and drive will fail, as the thudding *Prince Caspian*—the second adaptation of C. S. Lewis's Narnia series—failed: the intimacy evaporated, the pageantry became stultifying, the audience went zzzz. How then to keep the asses in the seats? *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, both directed by Chris Columbus, clanked rather obviously between their megabucks set pieces—Quidditch matches and dueling wands and so on. (In a minor mode, though, Columbus did do a lovely job with

Moaning Myrtle, the dead girl who haunts the Hogwarts bathroom like a spectral plumber's friend: "I was sitting in the U-bend," she gurgles, "thinking about death.") Alfonso Cuarón had a gift for magical detail—for the realism, if you like, of the violently fantastic. His *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* was a string of moments: Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, getting nihilistically face-sucked by a dementor, with tiny white-hot filaments of soul drifting upward from his parted lips; or the hippogriff Buckbeak, swooping low with Harry on his back, trailing innocent dinosaur knuckles in the waters of the lake.

Then there was saucy Mike Newell, director of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, whose camera candidly appraised the bottoms of the beautiful French girls from Beauxbatons Academy as

they sashayed across the flagstones of Hogwarts. Newell and his fellow Englishman David Yates—director of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, and future director of both installments of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—have a good grip on teenhood. Newell's touch is lighter; we remember Harry's friend, the sal-

low and sturgeon-lipped Ron Weasley, sitting stricken in the wake of one of the aforementioned French girls: "There she was, walking by." He moans. "You know, I like it when they walk ... Always like looking at them from behind." Harry in Yates's *Order of the Phoenix* is gaunt, stormy, traumatized: "Out there, when you're a second away from being murdered, or watching a friend die right before your eyes—you don't know what that's like." But he also shares a lovely kiss with Cho beneath the hovering mistletoe.

The epic scale, however, can be irresistible, even for directors as crafty as Newell and Yates. Shots of Hogwarts that begin at skydiver altitude and then plummet inward; wizards wielding their lightnings; etc. It's hard to retain an essential smallness under such

provocations. Consider Voldemort, Harry's nemesis, otherwise known as the Dark Lord, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or (less formally) You-Know-Who. The obvious comparison is with Tolkien's Sauron. Voldemort menaces, he gets about—like Sauron, he is always "on the move" or "gathering his forces"—but he never achieves the Sauronic heaviness, that power-drone of malignancy broadcasting steadily from the tower of Barad-dûr. His true nature, in fact, is that of a lavishly ruined human. He is weak, needy; he must have Harry's blood to prolong his existence. In the movies he is played by Ralph Fiennes, his features smeared and flattened as if pressing into the world through a thick film of ill will. He corresponds, perhaps, to a more Augustinian conception of evil than Tolkien's: he's a negative, a "loss of good." There's pathos here, people—an anagram of "I am Voldemort," I have just discovered, is "To maim Dr. Love." None of the movies so far, invested as they all are in his spellbinding badness, has quite caught the vulnerability of this character.

An overstatement of the spectacular may carry other hazards, too—hazards not aesthetic but (ahem) moral. The young reader lowers her copy of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and looks blinkingly about her bedroom; she hears her parents downstairs in the kitchen, accompanied by their usual battery of domestic sound effects. A question forms in her soul: Is she special like Harry, an undiscovered superstar in the hidden world of magic? Or is she just—oh, crap—a Muggle? Because the ordinary, unmagical human race, as presented in the Harry Potter books, doesn't appear to have much going for it. The Dursleys, among whom Harry spends the first 11 years of his life, are the sort of people the poet John Betjeman had in mind when he invited the friendly bombs to fall on Slough: suburban barbarians who "talk of sports and makes of cars / In various bogus Tudor bars / And daren't look up and see the stars / But belch instead." Decent, non-supremacist wizards are supposed to stick up for Muggledom, but these people are *ghastly*. They live at Number Four Privet Drive, and go pottering off in their car to the Best-Kept Lawn Competition. They hate

Attempts to filmically invest the adaptations with Tolkien-esque sweep and drive tend to fail. The pleasures of *Harry Potter* are more local, more eccentric.

magic. They hate Harry. Rendered doubly grotesque in the movie adaptations (Richard Griffiths hissing and squealing like a large, pink kettle), the Dursley household is little more than a boot camp for anarchism.

Is it this touch of contempt for ordinary mortals that inspired Father Gabriele Amorth, the Vatican's exorcist in chief, to declare that Rowling's work bears "the signature of the Prince of Darkness"? Probably not—though the Christian response to *Harry Potter* has been interesting. Michael O'Brien, the Catholic novelist and author of *A Landscape With Dragons: The Battle for Your Child's Mind*, has deplored Rowling's neo-Gnostic tendencies, her promotion of the practice of sorcery, and her overly rosy view of human potential. "There is no original sin in Potterworld," he complained in 2007, upon the publication of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. (Really? The fact that Slytherin, one of the four houses of Hogwarts, is by tradition full of rotters and wrong 'uns and Voldemort sympathizers—that bad-egg-ness has, so to speak, an

institutional claim on the school, and a fixed percentage of its soul—suggests to me a fairly undeluded view of human nature.) Then there are those Christians who find Potterworld quite congenial—charged, indeed, with the Good News. Like John Granger, author of *Looking for God in Harry Potter*:

I am convinced that the fundamental reason for the astonishing popularity of the Harry Potter novels is their ability to meet a spiritual longing for some experience of the truths of life, love, and death taught by Christianity but denied by secular culture.

So which is it? Is J. K. Rowling a sneaky occultist or a mistress of pious allegory? Both. Neither. Her books contain infernal hints, Christological echoes, centaurs, phoenixes, house-elves and Moaning Myrtle—a postmodern superfluity of myth and invention into which she dips and dips and keeps on dipping, because it will never be exhausted, and it will never quite add up. The movie adaptations, gorgeous and thrill-packed but somehow

incoherent, bring all this to the surface. There isn't a Middle-Earth-style cosmogony to be extrapolated here, or a glimmering Narnian vision: the pleasures of the Harry Potter saga are more local, more eccentric. If you haven't read *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, for example, and are planning to attend the movie, you can look forward to discovering the identity of Hogwarts' new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor. The post's previous occupants have all come to grief, one by one, like drummers from Spinal Tap: Quirinus Quirrell (Voldemortian possession), Gilderoy Lockhart (amnesia), Remus Lupin (lycanthropy), Alastor Moody (identity theft), Dolores Umbridge (humiliation, retreat) ... Who's next? Very important for Harry. The whole matter should be discussed, at length, with his two best friends—the lovely Hermione, the loyal Ron. And after that, homework. Enchantment, ordinariness, and a dab of nonsense—it's a portrait of the wizard as a young man. ■

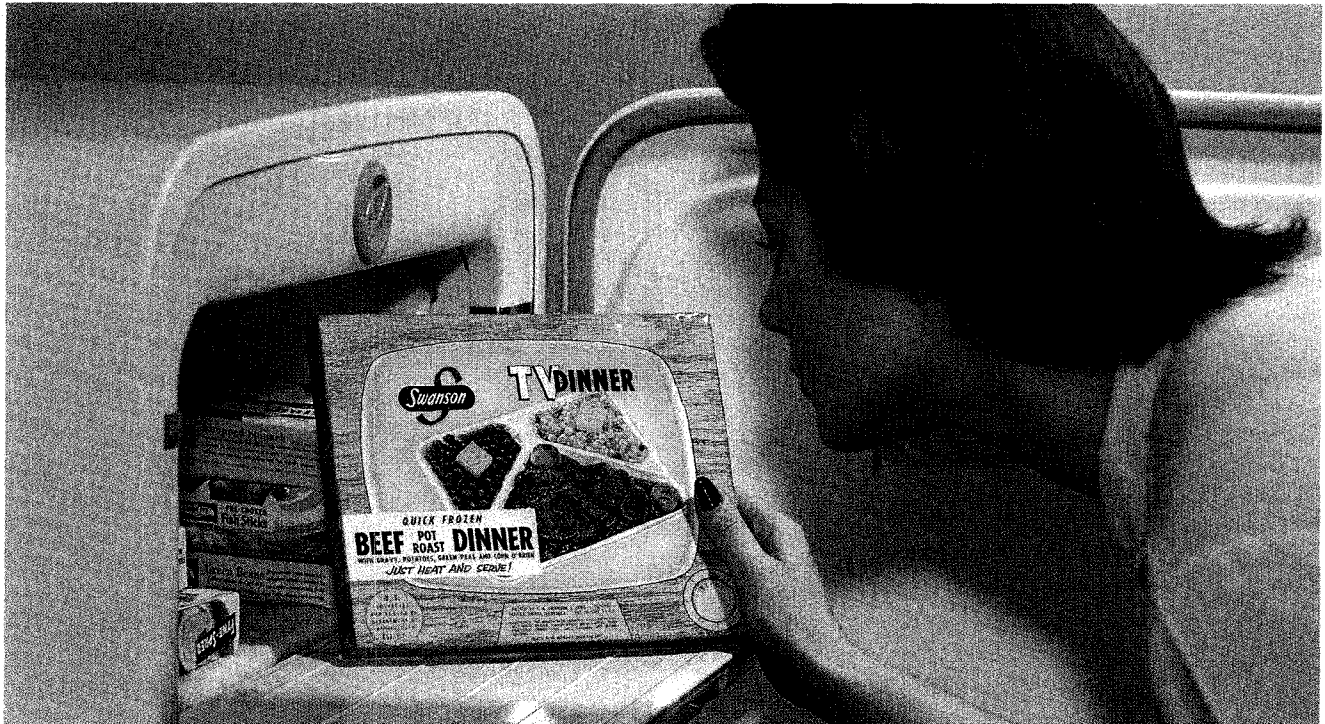
James Parker is an Atlantic correspondent.

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Home Economics

Even in a depression, it seems, Americans won't stop feathering their nests.

By Megan McArdle

"HOME," WROTE ROBERT Frost, "is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Small wonder that when we're faced with economic hardship, that's where we retreat. As Rogan Kersh, a professor of public policy at New York University, recently told ABC News, recessions bring out our nesting instincts. According to Kersh, "This holds true across income classes and other demographic groups: from college students to retirees, we're turning back to the home front."

We don't really have much choice. All recessions involve cutting back, but overleveraged Americans seem to have taken a hacksaw to their expenditures—the personal savings rate more than tripled in 2008 and is still rising. Even most Americans with big mortgages, little home equity, and too much on their credit cards are struggling to get

rid of debt the old-fashioned way: by paying it off. We can hardly have new fun while we're still working off the excesses of yesteryear.

Or rather, we can't *buy* new fun. The emergence of leisure activity as what economists call "market production"—something that is bought and sold—is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until well into the 20th century, most leisure was "home production," created and consumed without much cash changing hands. Our ancestors made parties out of things they needed to do anyway—quilting, raising a barn, eating—or they entertained one another, singing, reciting, dancing. Either way, any trading was strictly on a barter basis.

Perhaps that's why we still view buying entertainment as frivolous. Personal-finance gurus such as Dave Ramsey and Suze Orman rarely interrogate callers about how many parties they give, how often they fly home, or

whether their needlepoint is taking up too much disposable income. (Don't laugh—I can testify that needlepointing, like many other crafts, is surprisingly expensive.) No, they want to know how many meals you eat out, how much time you spend in bars, where you go on vacation. In a recent Pew study, a majority of Americans identified recreation and dining out as activities to cut back on during hard times.

Even the traditionally recession-proof "sin" industries—gambling, drinking, smoking—have been punished. In February, Atlantic City had its worst revenue decline in 30 years. Meanwhile, just as they said they would, Americans have cut deep into their dining-out budgets. Once considered a special treat, or emergency relief for an overworked housewife, in 2007 "food prepared outside the home" accounted for nearly half of all food dollars spent in America. This trend seems, at least

WILLIAM GOTTIEB/CORBIS

temporarily, to be reversing itself. A few downscale outlets like McDonalds are actually thriving, but most sit-down establishments are not. Empty bar stools are easier to find, too.

Yet overstretched Americans aren't necessarily, as Dave Ramsey famously puts it, living on "beans and rice, rice and beans." At a retailer meeting in January, Costco CEO Jim Sinegal reported that his firm was seeing strong consumer sales in prime meats and other luxuries, as customers apparently tried to replicate their for-gone restaurant meals at home. And a recent report from an industry analyst projected that alcohol sales for home consumption will rise almost 5 percent in 2009—especially impressive when you consider that consumer prices are currently falling.

People aren't just pulling basic consumption back into the home. In fact, they're willing to spend new money on "unnecessary" goods—cast-iron cookware or flat-screen TVs—to make their homes as entertaining as the public spaces they've left behind.

It's too early to tell what sort of long-term impact these shifts in consumption patterns will have—if any at all. But as we all stare backward toward the Great Depression, looking for clues to our future, it's worth noting that evidence from our nation's lost decade suggests that today's shifts in behavior may well be profound. The Great Depression not only changed savings habits, it also marked a change in how we spent our money, particularly at home.

We aren't the only generation to have gone on a credit-fueled buying binge—or to regret the hangover that followed. As in the current crisis, the expansion in credit during the 1920s was not limited to mortgages, or even to margin loans. Americans had discovered they could buy the splendid new array of consumer goods, from radios to automobiles, on credit—and manufacturers were eager to help them, since a bigger market made it easier for them to achieve the economies of scale recently made possible by the assembly line.

So what happened to all those new geegaws when the party ended? Perhaps

surprisingly, the working classes continued to purchase their radios and electric iceboxes. In 1926, 20 percent of American households had radios. That figure reached 50 percent in 1929—and 75 percent two years later, in the depths of the Depression. Refrigerators were in 20 percent of households in 1932, and 50 percent in 1938. Other appliances, from toasters to washing machines, pushed deeper into the market even as consumers were supposed to "purge the rottenness out of the system," as President Hoover's treasury secretary, Andrew Mellon, said.

Many of these goods had something in common: they made home production more productive. To be sure, in 1929 few households ate at restaurants every night. But many households purchased another sort of market production: domestic servants. Servants were never as common in America as they were in Europe (where Agatha Christie, in her later years, mused that she had never imagined being so rich that she'd have a motor car, nor so poor that she wouldn't have servants). And their

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numbers had already begun declining in the 1920s, thanks to immigration rules that cut into the supply of willing workers. Nonetheless, domestic help was more common among the middle class then than it is today. Even my great-grandmother, living on a small farm in western New York, had “hired girls” to help with the heavy work.

The women’s magazines of the Depression years chronicle the efforts of wives whose husbands had suffered business setbacks to adjust to life with few or no servants. Informal, inexpensive entertainments like “Sunday Night Suppers” featuring welsh rarebit or chili con carne became popular. But while these meals could be made in advance and served without a maid’s help, many seemed to require a new electrical appliance or two to stand in for the missing servants: refrigerators to store the food (and obviate daily marketing); electric chafing dishes,

waffle irons, and toasters to heat or cook it; plug-in percolators to serve coffee in the living room. The then-newfangled pop-up toaster was actually marketed in the ’30s as an entertaining appliance—the “Toastmaster Hostess Hospitality Set” showcased an elevated toaster surrounded by various toppings that guests could spread on *their very own* fresh, hot toast! In promotional materials, beaming hostesses carried their toaster trays like sacred offerings.

But that’s not the whole story. It turns out that even in a depression, people are more eager consumers of devices that help them consume leisure than they are of those that create it. If you look at a list of major household appliances, radio and television were by far the fastest to catch on. Their nearest competitors, the refrigerator and the electric iron, weren’t even close—even though many other “practical” appliances were introduced later, when

households were richer, and more likely to have electricity.

In fact, radio boasts the second-shortest interval between introduction and adoption by 75 percent of U.S. households, topped only by the black-and-white television, even though radio completed the last third of that journey during a major financial crisis. At the time, radios were not cheap. In 1929, the average set cost \$133, when per capita GDP was only \$850. Yet Americans continued to buy them even as the Depression deepened. They did so partly because a radio could substitute for so many other goods: phonograph records, concerts, lectures, newspapers, even movies. The percentage of Americans who attended a weekly movie reached an all-time high near 70 percent in 1930, and then dropped like a stone. By 1934 it had fallen to 40 percent, where it hovered for the rest of the decade. Americans, it seems, regard paying someone else to entertain them as a frivolous expense that can be cut—but buying equipment that does the same thing as an imperative.

Historical parallels are never perfect. But this one is pretty strong. Netflix, the online movie-rental site, had a great year in 2008, increasing its subscriber base by 26 percent; it raised its profits by 70 percent in the beginning of 2009. Redbox, which provides movie rentals from vending machines in supermarkets and other retailers, is also booming, and recently announced plans to expand from about 13,000 locations to 20,000 by the end of the year. Even in a recession, \$1 a movie, or \$8.99 a month, seems like an affordable luxury.

Preliminary data suggest that Americans are also making substantial capital investments in home entertainment. Although DVD sales are down, sales of pricey Blu-Ray discs during the first three months of 2009 were double the level of a year earlier. Kindles and iPod nanos have also seen strong sales. Even flat-panel televisions, the iconic unnecessary consumer good of the past decade, have proved surprisingly resilient. Corning, which makes the glass for many of the televisions, reported February sales up at least 30 percent over last year in most countries, and expects a further 9 percent increase overall in 2009. Lee Scott, the former

CEO of Wal-Mart, reported strong flat-panel sales in the beginning of January, after a disappointing Christmas season.

Of course, sales were concentrated among the value models with thin profit margins. Meanwhile this spring, Pioneer announced that it was exiting the plasma-TV market and abandoning its Kuro line, widely regarded as both the best and the priciest consumer flat-panels available. The company was unable to persuade budget-constrained consumers to pay for quality.

This looks a lot like what happened to radios, which increased their market share in the early '30s largely by getting a lot cheaper, quickly. In 1930, manufacturers cleared out inventory by slashing prices on existing models by more than 30 percent, while making sets with fewer components and no pricey wood cabinets. By 1933, \$10 "peewee" models brought the average spending on a new radio down to just \$35.

But many modern Americans are getting an even better deal out of the companies that help us fritter away our spare hours: we're enjoying their

products for nothing. From Facebook to blogs to YouTube, we're getting an unprecedented array of free entertainment. Many of these purveyors have hazy plans to make money from ads or subscriptions, but so far, they're just short of corporate-sponsored charity.

Does this herald a permanent return to a homier culture? It's not clear how long we can continue to consume those useful Web services without paying—information may want to be free, but electric companies and computer manufacturers want to get paid. Since the beginning of 2008, multiple media start-ups have gone belly-up, in the worst ad market in living memory.

The larger trend, however, seems more robust. The generation that lived through the Great Depression was permanently altered by the experience, which is why everyone's grandparents played pinochle and collected rubber bands in enormous balls. The Great Depression left us with a legacy of devices that transformed the home, saving our labor and helping us waste the extra time they gave us. But it also

made us a nation of compulsive savers. In 1929, the personal savings rate was about 4.5 percent of disposable income. After World War II, it was more like 7 to 10 percent—until the oldest survivors of the Great Depression began leaving the workforce in the early to mid 1980s. That's when the savings rate began its long decline, bottoming out in 2005 at just 0.4 percent. Unless we come out of this crisis quickly, those of us old enough to worry about paying the bills will probably be forever altered.

But that doesn't mean that we'll never again shop for granite countertops (unless they go the way of Formica and the Harvest Gold refrigerator). That generation of obsessive savers was also the generation that blazed the trail into the suburbs, and mass homeownership. No matter how hard the financial crisis hits, we won't entirely cut out the spending we do to ensure that there's no place like home. ■

Megan McArdle is The Atlantic's business and economics editor, and the editor of business.theatlantic.com.

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CONTENT



Last Stand

Why *The Economist* is thriving while *Time* and *Newsweek* fade
By Michael Hirschorn

NEWSWEEK'S RECENT DECISION to get out of the news-digesting business and reposition itself as a high-end magazine selling in-depth commentary and reportage follows *Time* magazine's emergency retrenchment along similar lines. It accelerates a process by which the 76-year-old weekly will purposely reduce its circulation from 2.7 million to a bit more than half of that. (Its circulation was nearly 3.5 million in 1988.) Likewise, *Time*'s circulation, which 20 years ago was close to 5 million, is now

at 3.4 million. Both newsweeklies are seeking to avoid the fate of *U.S. News & World Report*, which after years (decades?) of semi-relevance gave up on the idea of weekly publication entirely.

These tactical retreats by *Newsweek* and *Time* are brave stabs at relevance in a changing media environment. They're also a decade late.

In the digital age, with its overabundance of information, the modern newsweekly is in a particularly poignant position. Designed

nearly a century ago to be all things to all people, it Chaplin-esquely tries to straddle thousands of rapidly fragmenting micro-niches, a mainframe

in an iPod world. The audience it was created to serve—middlebrow; curious, but not too curious; engaged, but only to a point—no longer exists. Newsweeklies were intended to be counter-

programming to newspapers, back when we were drowning in newsprint and needed a digest to redact that vast inflow of dead-tree objectivity.

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Now, in response to accelerating news cycles, the newspapers have effectively become newsweekly-style digests themselves, resorting to muddy “news analysis” now that the actual news has hit us on multiple platforms before we even open our front door in the morning.

Given that even these daily digests are faltering, how is it that a notionally similar weekly news digest—*The Economist*—is not only surviving, but thriving? Virtually alone among magazines, *The Economist* saw its advertising revenues increase last year by double digits—a remarkable 25 percent, according to the Publisher’s Information Bureau. *Newsweek*’s and *Time*’s dropped 27 percent and 14 percent, respectively. (*The Economist*’s revenues declined in the first quarter of this year, but so did almost every magazine’s.) Indeed, *The Economist* has been growing consistently and powerfully for years, tracking in near mirror-image reverse the decline of its U.S. rivals. Despite being positioned as a niche product, its U.S. circulation is nearing 800,000, and it will inevitably overtake *Newsweek* on that front soon enough.

Unlike its rivals, *The Economist* has been unaffected by the explosion of digital media; if anything, the digital revolution has cemented its relevance. *The Economist* has become an arbiter of right-thinking opinion (free-market right-center, if you want to be technical about it; with a dose of left-center social progressivism) at a time when arbiters in general are in ill favor. It is a general-interest magazine for an ever-increasing audience, the self-styled global elite, at a time when general-interest anything is having a hard time interesting anybody. And it sells more than 75,000 copies a week on U.S. newsstands for \$6.99 (!) at a time when we’re told information wants to be free and newsstands are disappearing.

All of this suggests that although digital media is clearly supplanting

everything analog, digital will not necessarily destroy analog. A better word might be *displace*. And *The Economist*’s success holds a number of lessons for dead-tree revanchists on how to manage this displacement.

The easy lesson might be that quality wins out. *The Economist* is truly a remarkable invention—a weekly newspaper, as it calls itself, that canvasses the globe with an assurance that no one else can match. Where else, really, can you actually keep up with Africa? But even as *The Economist* signals its gravitas with every strenuously reader-unfriendly page, it has never been quite as brilliant as its more devoted fans would have the rest of us believe. (Though, one must add, nor is it as shallow as its detractors would tell you it is.)

At its worst, the writing can be shoddy, thin research supporting smug hypotheses. The “leaders,” or main articles, tend to “urge” politicians to solve complex problems, as if the key to, say, reconstituting the global banking system were but a simple act of cogitation away. A typical leader, from January, on the ongoing Gaza violence was an erudite, deeply historical write-around on Arab-Israeli violence that ended up arriving at the same conclusion everyone else arrived at long ago: Israel must give up land for peace.

The science-and-technology pages tend toward Gladwell-lite popularizations of academic papers from British universities. A February report on new scientific analyses of crowd behavior seemed to promise a fresh look at how police might deal with potentially rowdy mobs, but it quickly degenerated into an unsatisfying gloss on a British professor’s explanation of why some crowds become violent and some do not, with some syntax-obliterating hemming and hawing for good measure. (“And it is that which may help violence to be controlled.”)

Pieces like these tend to support the *Economist*-haters, who believe the magazine is simply conventional-

wisdom-spewing crack for Anglophiles. But then you come across a brilliant exploration of the current drug-fueled violence in Mexico, offered in support of *The Economist*’s long-held position in favor of legalization, and you suddenly feel like you have a handle on the world that you didn’t have before.

The Economist prides itself on cleverly distilling the world into a reasonably compact survey. Another word for this is *blogging*, or at least what blogging might be after it matures—meaning, after it transcends its current status as a free-fire zone and settles into a more comprehensive system of gathering and presenting information. As a result, although its self-marketing subtly sells a kind of sleek, mid-last-century Concorde-flying sangfroid, *The Economist* has reached its current level of influence and importance because it is, in every sense of the word, a true global digest for an age when the amount of undigested, undigestible information online continues to metastasize. And that’s a very good place to be in 2009.

True, *The Economist* virtually never gets scoops, and the information it does provide is available elsewhere ... if you care to spend 20 hours Googling. But now that information is infinitely replicable and pervasive, original reporting will never again receive its due. The real value of *The Economist* lies in its smart analysis of everything it deems worth knowing—and smart packaging, which may be the last truly unique attribute in the digital age.

For a magazine that effectively blogged *avant la lettre*, *The Economist* has never had much digital savvy. It offered a complex mix of free and paid content (rarely a winning strategy) until two years ago and was so unprepared for the Internet that it couldn’t even secure theeconomist.com as its Web domain. (It later tried, unsuccessfully, to claim the URL.) Today, access to the site is free of charge, excepting deep archival material, but while editors have made some desultory efforts at adding social-networking features, most of the magazine’s readers seem to have no idea the site exists. While other publications whore themselves to Google, The Huffington Post, and the Drudge Report, almost no one links

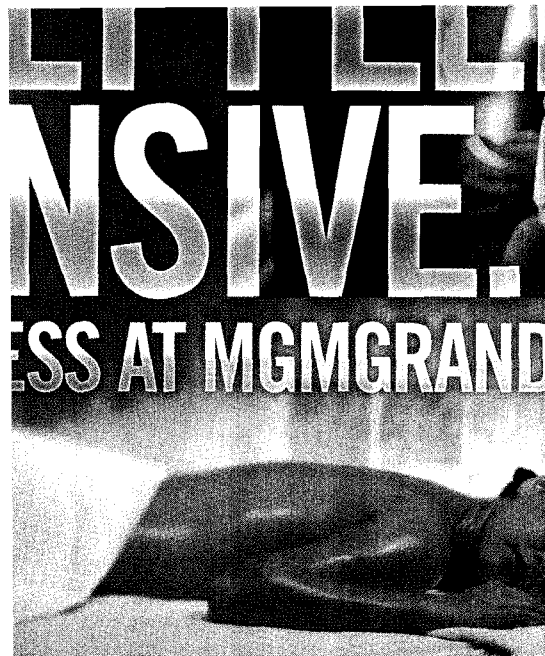
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essential



to *The Economist*. It sits primly apart from the orgy of link love elsewhere on the Web.

This turns out to have been a lucky accident. Unlike practically all other media "brands," *The Economist* remains primarily a print product, and it is valued accordingly. In other words, readers continue to believe its stories have some value. As a result, *The Economist* has become a living test case of the path not taken by *Time* and *Newsweek*, whose Web strategies have succeeded in grabbing eyeballs (*Time* has 4.7 million unique users a month, and *Newsweek* has 2 million, compared with *The Economist*'s 700,000, according to one measure) while dooming their print products to near irrelevance.

It's no surprise, then, that the redesigned *Time* seems to bear an ever-greater resemblance to *The Economist* (its editor is on record as being a fan; and every other editor of a vaguely upscale magazine nurses a hard case of *Economist* envy). The revamped *Newsweek*, not yet unsheathed at press time, no doubt will as well.

As it happens, the new-look *Time* is quite a good read—my earlier prejudice against it, I'm sure, being a learned response similar to that of millions of others who came to see it as doctor's-waiting-room fodder. Perusing a recent issue, I found a sharp essay on the changing ethical landscape of "Great Recession" America, and a terrific piece of reportage about how Detroiters are responding to the accelerating collapse of their city and, more generally, how cities should respond when significant chunks of their metropolitan area become unsalvageable.

But it takes time and millions of dollars, and possibly risible branding campaigns, to turn quintessentially middlebrow secondary reads into upper-middlebrow must-reads. And even as *Time* and *Newsweek* attempt to copy *The Economist*'s success, they seem to be misunderstanding what it is, exactly, that they should be copying. By repositioning themselves as repositories of commentary and long-form reporting—much like this magazine, it's worth noting, which has never delivered impressive profit margins—the American newsweeklies are going away from precisely the thing that

has propelled *The Economist*'s rise: its status as a humble digest, with a consistent authorial voice, that covers absolutely everything that you need to be informed about. (Tellingly, the very lo-fi digest *The Week*, which has copped *The Economist*'s attitude without any real reporting or analysis at all, is thriving as well.)

The secret to *The Economist*'s success is not its brilliance, or its hauteur, or its typeface. The writing in *Time* and *Newsweek* may be every bit as smart, as assured, as the writing in *The Economist*. But neither one feels like the only magazine you need to read. You may like the new *Time* and *Newsweek*. But you must—or at least, brilliant marketing has convinced you that you must—subscribe to *The Economist*.

Perhaps *Time* and *Newsweek* simply can't mimic *The Economist* in function as well as form. The rapid marketplace shifts that are forcing the newsweeklies to retrench may have bled them of the resources necessary to imitate their British rival's globe-saturating coverage—say, the reports on trade policy in Botswana; the 30-page specials on fusion energy in Indonesia; the correspondents who scamper (or give the impression that they're scampering) across backwaters and remote deserts, spraying assured advice along the way like so much confetti.

But even if the newsweeklies had millions of dollars to throw at covering the world, their efforts probably wouldn't be enough. Repositioning your brand today is so much harder than it was in the old days, especially when you're destined to be seen as a copycat product. In the digital age, razor-sharp clarity and definition are the keys to success. Knowing what and who you are, and conveying that idea to an audience, is the only way to break through to readers ADD'ed out on an infinitude of choices. General-interest is out; niche is in. The irony, as restaurateurs and club-owners and sneaker companies and Facebook and Martha Stewart know—and as *The Economist* demonstrates, week in and week out—is that niche is sometimes the smartest way to take over the world. ■

Michael Hirschorn is an Atlantic contributing editor.

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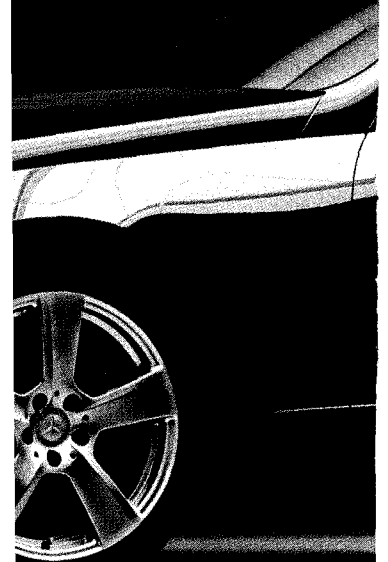
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"MAKE NO LITTLE PLANS," said President Barack Obama last spring, as he rolled out a pitch for a high-speed rail network—yet another presidential initiative to lift America out of recession and chart a new national course. In that spirit, The Atlantic offers a few modest proposals for making the world a better place.

QUICK FIXES

Illustrations by Mark and Matt Owens

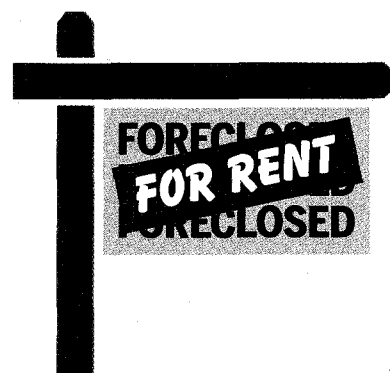
RENT YOUR OWN HOME

By Felix Salmon

THE HOUSING MESS is screaming out for a simple but effective solution. Ideally, such a solution would keep underwater homeowners in their homes even after they found themselves unwilling or unable to pay their mortgages; it would stop renters from being evicted from foreclosed homes when they're up-to-date on their rent; it would slash the number of foreclosure sales, which are driving house prices down nationwide; it would improve the quality of the national housing stock; it would give banks an easy-to-value income stream, instead of an impossible-to-value home, whenever they foreclosed on a property; and it would cost the government nothing. Amazingly, all of this can be done with just one policy: a decree

that whenever a bank forecloses on a home, the current occupant has the right to remain in the property indefinitely, simply by paying the fair-market rent. Banks are killing each other by racing to sell their foreclosed houses as quickly as possible, before they fall further in value; this policy would force a ceasefire that would help all of them. It would also put an end to the equally destructive syndrome of soon-to-be-foreclosed-upon homeowners trashing their houses before they're kicked out. This plan might not single-handedly end the recession. But it would certainly help. ■

Felix Salmon is the finance blogger for Reuters.



UNLEASH THE DOGS OF PEACE

By James S. Gibney

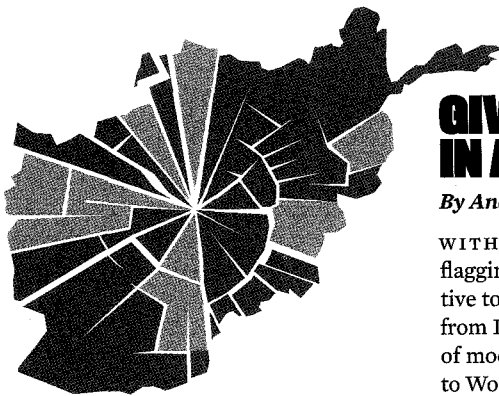
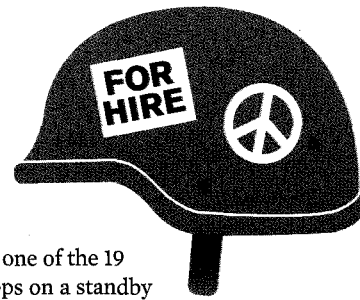
IN NOVEMBER 1999, the United Nations Security Council authorized sending peacekeepers to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since then, despite the growth of the UN force to more than 18,000 personnel, at a cost of more than \$1 billion a year, violence and turmoil have killed millions more Congolese. Of course, some things haven't helped, like the Pakistani peacekeepers who rearmed, in return for gold, the militia they were supposed to be disarming; or the Indian troops who reportedly traded arms for ivory from the rebels and bought dope from them in the bargain; or the contingent of UN troops who failed to stop a massacre of 150 people taking place less than a mile away. Even before that tragedy last December, Congolese had rioted outside one UN compound over the mission's ineffectiveness, and the Spanish general newly appointed to command the UN force had resigned in a huff over weak political support and feeble military resources. And so it goes with all but the most routine UN peacekeeping missions, which are effective only to the extent that their host combatants allow.

There is a different, more robust approach to making peace in nasty places: deploy private military companies like Executive Outcomes, whose small, highly trained force defeated insurgencies in Sierra Leone and Angola during the 1990s. Executive Outcomes is now out of business. But as researchers like Peter Singer have documented, the private-military-company marketplace now fields scores of

firms (including the U.S. giants Xe—formerly Blackwater—and DynCorp) that take in billions in revenue. Put them on retainer, and they'll go where they're paid to go—unlike every one of the 19 countries that had pledged troops on a standby basis for UN peacekeeping and then refused, in 1994, to send them to Rwanda.

We don't condone "mercenaries," sniffs the UN. But a system where the top 10 payers of peacekeeping dues (rich countries like the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, etc.) rely on the top 10 troop contributors (poor countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Jordan, Nepal, Ghana, etc.) to do their dirty work sounds pretty mercenary to me. Countries that provide troops get roughly \$1,100 a month per soldier, many times the salary of a Bangladeshi private at home—not that he'd see much of it. Critics worry about accountability of private military companies, since they operate in a murky legal environment. But their forces seem no less accountable than, say, the miscreant UN contingents serving in Congo, and they would certainly be more effective. Some UN relief agencies already rely on military contractors for security. Why not extend that protection to the populations they're trying to keep alive? ■

James S. Gibney is an Atlantic deputy managing editor.



GIVE UP ON DEMOCRACY IN AFGHANISTAN

By Andrew J. Bacevich

WITH AMERICAN EFFORTS to pacify Afghanistan now in their eighth year and flagging, the Obama administration confronts this question: Is there an alternative to the Bush strategy of invade, occupy, and transform? Although few lessons from Iraq apply directly to Afghanistan, one does: "transformation," in the sense of modernization, is hopeless. Operation Iraqi Freedom now ranks second only to World War II as the most expensive conflict in U.S. history. Transforming Iraq has cost roughly \$1 trillion, with the meter still running and the job unfinished. Transforming Afghanistan, by any measure an even more daunting task, is likely to cost as much or more. That's money we don't have. Even if we did, the attempt to create a cohesive nation-state governed from Kabul (something that has never existed in modern times) is a fool's errand. Better to acknowledge and build on the Afghan tradition of decentralized governance. Let tribal chiefs rule: just provide them with incentives to keep jihadists out. Where incentives don't work, punitive action—U.S. air strikes in neighboring Pakistan provide an illustrative example—can serve as a backup. Denying terrorists sanctuary in Afghanistan does not require pacification—and leaving Afghans to manage their own affairs as they always have will reduce internal instability, while freeing up the resources to allow our own country to tackle other challenges more pressing than the quixotic quest to modernize Afghanistan. ■

Andrew J. Bacevich is a professor of history and international relations at Boston University.

PRIVATIZE THE SEAS

By Gregg Easterbrook

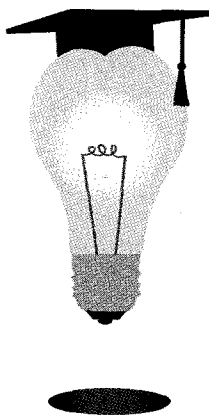
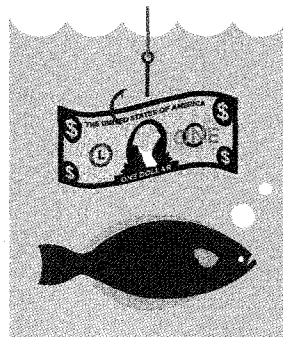
A FEW YEARS AGO at the Double Musky Inn in Girdwood, Alaska, I had a halibut dinner so delicious, I can still taste that fish. Good restaurant? Yes, but even better fishery management. About a decade ago, the Alaskan halibut catch was switched from a system of "catch all you can" in a very short period, to a system of tradeable permits. Now halibut season does not happen over a few chaotic days marred by colliding boats and overlapping lines, followed by freezing of the fish and a price bust as everything hits the market at once. Instead, fishermen holding an assured right, which they won on the free market (to bid for a permit, go to www.alaskabroker.com), spread their work over many months. Thus halibut coming to the market are just-caught fresh, and the price of fish is less likely to soar and plunge. And halibut stocks, spared a concentrated onslaught of fishing boats, are more sustainable.

Many environmental alarms are overstated, but fishery depletion is not. Numerous fish stocks are shrinking; in 2003, about a third were close to collapse. Because developing nations depend on fish for protein, this issue is not just for sushi aficionados. Generally, nations control the waters out to 200 miles off their coastlines. Some use cumbersome top-heavy regulations to limit fishing in their coastal waters, and the results aren't encouraging. In some places, like Maine's lobster fishery, fishermen often self-regulate. But increasingly, nations are turning to tradeable permits, which go by names such as Dedicated Access Privilege

or Individual Transferable Quotas. Australia, New Zealand, and Iceland pioneered the idea in the 1980s, and their fish stocks have for the most part recovered nicely; a recent University of California study shows that privatizing fishing rights usually makes fish populations significantly less prone to collapse.

Unfortunately, only limited laws govern the open ocean, where factory trawlers scoop up huge volumes of fish without concern for maintaining a healthy population. These waters epitomize the "tragedy of the commons," in which "anything goes" leads to runaway exploitation, because no one has a property interest in safeguarding the common resource. The Law of the Sea Treaty, written before the development of tradeable quotas, could be amended to apply the idea to blue water, or open ocean, beyond the 200-mile mark. Some will oppose this as converting what's under the seas into private possession, but the alternative seems to be catastrophic overfishing until the ocean biosphere collapses. An international system of tradeable open-seas fishing permits wouldn't be easy to enforce at first (enforcement of many international agreements gets worked out with experience). Here is the carrot at the end of the fishing line: because fish lay fantastic quantities of eggs, when fish-stock depletion stops, the population recovers quickly, meaning more fish for everyone. ■

Gregg Easterbrook is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.



TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLEGES

By Thomas Toch

AMERICA'S PARENTS and politicians obsess over getting kids to go to college. But the delivery of a decent education, once the kids are on campus, is at least as large a challenge. Only about half of all college entrants earn degrees within six years. And many who do aren't learning much: one study indicates, for instance, that only 38 percent of graduating college students can successfully compare the viewpoints of two newspaper editorials.

The conventional wisdom is that you get what you pay for—that the larger the price tag, the better the product. But that's not true in higher education. Tuition has been skyrocketing for years, with little evidence that education has improved. Universities typically favor research and publishing over teaching. And influential college rankings like the one published by *U.S. News & World Report* measure mostly wealth and status (alumni giving rates, school reputation, incoming students' SAT scores); they reveal next to nothing about what students learn.

We need to shed more light on how well colleges are educating their students—to help prospective students make better decisions, and to exert pressure on the whole system to provide better value for money.

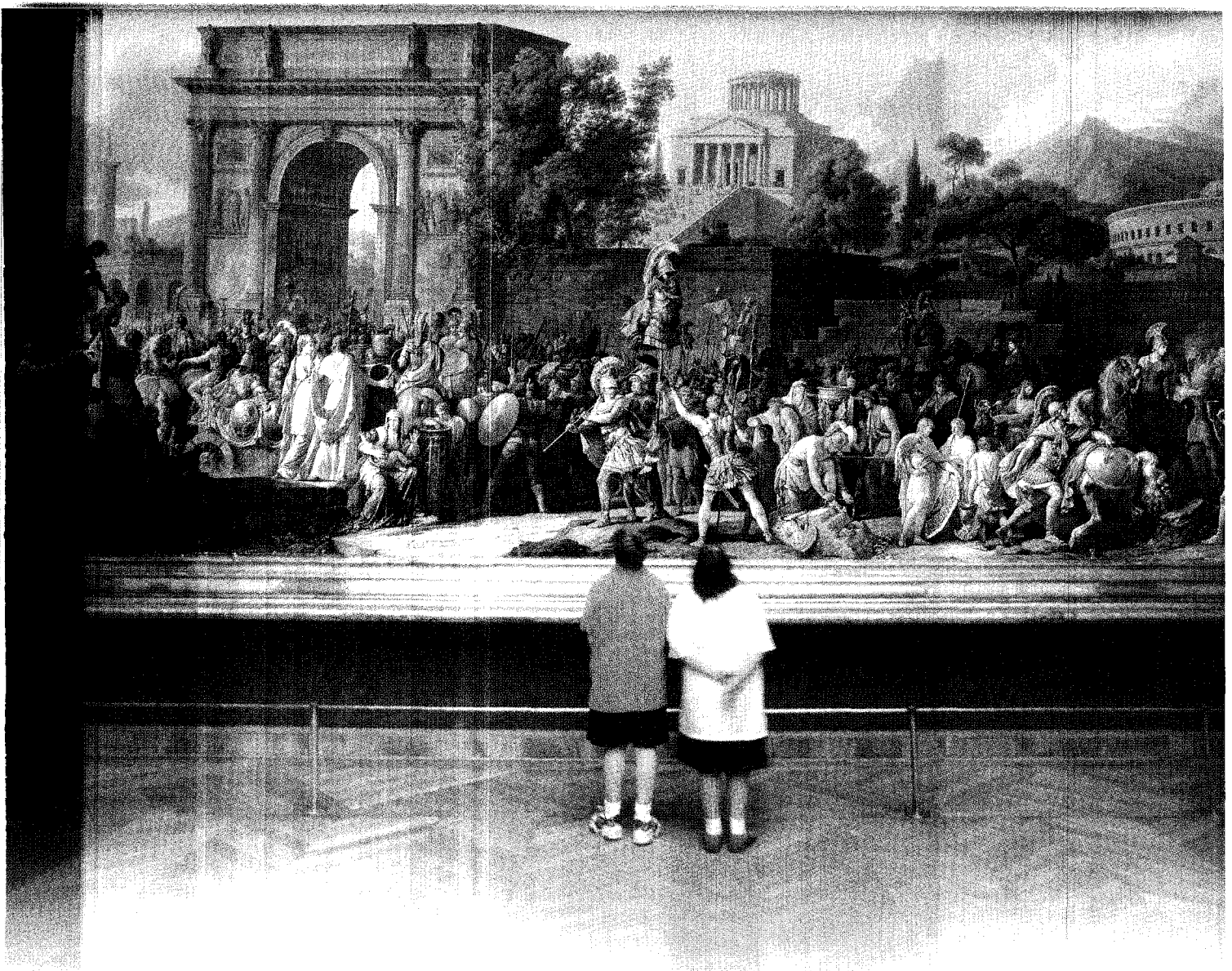
Reliable measures of the quality of undergraduate teaching already exist. The National Survey of

Student Engagement gathers data on factors proven to correlate with learning—things like the number of books and lengthy papers assigned in courses. (The organization reports little relationship between having a prominent brand name and teaching students well.) The Collegiate Learning Assessment tests students' critical thinking and measures progress over a college career.

But the nonprofits that administer the CLA and NSSE can't report their findings publicly. Colleges and universities participate voluntarily and have control over the distribution of results. Many are loath to put them on public display, because reputation doesn't necessarily align with results.

The Obama administration could be a catalyst for change. The stimulus package includes \$30 billion in tuition aid, at a time when colleges are starving for money. That gives the government leverage—it should push for systematic public information on the quality of undergraduate learning, school by school. This would not only serve students; over time, it would improve the quality of our workforce and the prospects for our entire economy. ■

Thomas Toch is co-director of Education Sector, a nonprofit think tank.



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WELCOME QUEST WORKERS

By Kerry Howley

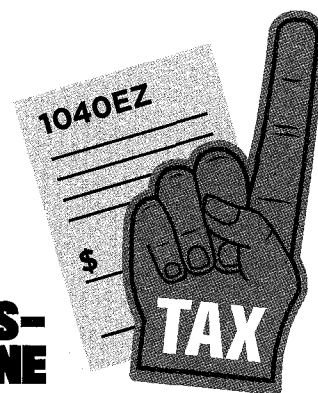
SAY YOU'RE A Bangladeshi taxi driver struggling to survive on your daily wage in Dhaka. A couple of nongovernmental organizations have offered you help, but you can pick only one form of assistance: access to microcredit, or a chance to work in the United States. What's the better deal? According to a recent analysis by the Center for Global Development, microcredit loans might net you an extra \$700 over the course of a lifetime. Working stateside, you're likely to make the same amount in a month.

Nothing rich countries can send the global poor—not loans, not textbooks, not fair-wage campaign materials—will boost the income of the average worker nearly so much as letting him walk among the wealthy. Transported from Haiti or Nigeria to the United States or Canada, a low-skilled worker will watch the value of his labor jump more than 700 percent—instantly. Wage gaps of that magnitude have some economists, notably Harvard's Lant Pritchett, supporting a small but potentially revolutionary shift in the nature of economic cooperation: a global guest-worker program, run by rich countries in the interest of the poor. Every wealthy country would hand out enough work visas to increase its labor force by 3 percent, and the visas would be temporary, allowing the benefits to be broadly shared among successive waves of foreign workers.

Because border control stifles so much potentially beneficial cooperation, even a modest easing of immigration restrictions produces huge payoffs. In 2005, the World Bank estimated that a 3 percent program could yield \$300 billion annually for the citizens of developing countries. That's \$180 billion more than what the major Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member countries dished out in foreign aid last year. So while aid is a transfer that leaves wealthy countries slightly poorer, a global guest-worker plan would leave the countries of the OECD slightly better off.

Admittedly, this moment of recession-fueled panic may not be the most politically expedient time to roll out the Pritchett plan for global economic justice. But those shocking wage differentials will still be around when rich countries are feeling flush. Pritchett says he has a model of how game-changing ideas are received over time, and it works something like this: "Crazy. Crazy. Crazy. Obvious." ■

Kerry Howley is a contributing editor at Reason.



END ALL TAXES—EXCEPT ONE

By Reihan Salam

THE PROPERTY TAX might be the most loathed tax in America. During the 1970s, a number of activists—angry that their tax burdens were rising as their neighborhoods became more desirable—pushed to abolish it altogether. President Nixon proposed significantly reducing state property taxes by implementing a federal consumption tax that would fund public education across the country. But when this proved a lost cause, the masses sought instead to strictly limit annual property-tax increases through a series of ballot initiatives. The result hasn't been pretty. Chronic revenue shortfalls have crippled local governments ever since, leading to heavier reliance on punishing state income and sales taxes.

What if the problem isn't the property tax at all but rather, well, all other taxes? In 1879, Henry George, a brilliant if slightly crankish autodidact, published *Progress and Poverty*, a scathing polemic that blamed all economic ills on the private ownership of land. A staunch believer in laissez-faire economics, George found it perverse that we tax productive activities like work and innovative investment while letting landowners grow rich simply because they scooped up property at the right time. In that spirit, George called for a "Single Tax" on the unimproved value of land. There's a certain compelling logic to the Single Tax that stands the test of time. When you tax income, aren't you punishing people for working hard? But when you tax an asset like land, you're simply encouraging the most valuable use of that land. In the years since George faded from the scene, a number of economists, from Milton Friedman to Paul Romer, have found virtue in the Single Tax, not least because it creates the right incentives for government. Simply put, the better you govern, the more valuable the property. The more valuable the property, the more revenue you raise. ■

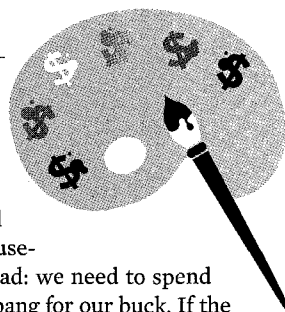
Reihan Salam is a fellow at the New America Foundation.

PAY THE ARTISTS

By Felix Salmon

WE'RE LIVING IN a newly frugal world. But the rediscovered values of thrift and moderation should apply to the government as much as they do to households. No more trillion-dollar misadventures abroad: we need to spend money at home, and we need to get the maximum bang for our buck. If the Obama administration is serious about stimulating the economy and creating as many new jobs as possible, one choice is clear: it should announce a massive increase in federal arts funding. Artists are among the very poorest citizens. When they get cash, they spend it both quickly and carefully. That's not what most recipients of federal largesse do, but it happens to be exactly what economists look for in any stimulus package. Arts spending is fantastic at creating employment: for every \$30,000 or so spent on the arts, one more person gets a job, compared with about \$1 million if you're building a road or hospital. And such spending has a truly lasting benefit: the Works Progress Administration didn't just create murals, it subsidized enormous leaps in graphic design, in theater (including America's first all-black production of *Macbeth*), and in fine art. One painter lived off the WPA's Federal Art Project for eight years before finally getting his first solo show in 1943. Maybe a similar program today could produce America's next Jackson Pollock. ■

Felix Salmon is the finance blogger for Reuters.



CIVILIZE HOMELAND SECURITY

By James Fallows

THE DEPARTMENT of Homeland Security should not exist. Its rushed, bipartisan creation in 2002 reflected the political imperative to do *something* in response to disaster, whether or not that something made sense. (See also: case for the Iraq War.)

Since then, it has failed basic tests of bureaucratic effectiveness. One of the supposed benefits of amalgamation was to remove wasteful overlap so America could spend more money where it mattered and cut back everywhere else. In fact, as Cindy Williams of MIT has demonstrated, the shares of the DHS budget now devoted to the department's individual parts—the Coast Guard, Border Patrol, etc.—are the same as they were when they were first lumped together.

The DHS has also failed to develop a sustainable long-term antiterrorism strategy. Such a strategy would involve: focusing on the truly catastrophic threats (above all, loose nukes); building the best recovery and emergency systems, for resilience in case Plan A fails; and otherwise encouraging free people to live brave lives. Instead, the open-ended “Threat Level Orange” approach promotes vague background anxiety, making the public too complacent and too fearful. As for resilience: the DHS component known as FEMA showed its stuff during Katrina.

Yet sometimes undoing a mistake is more disruptive than helpful. We probably can't get rid of the department. So, two ways to mitigate the damage: change the offensive, antirepublican, Teutono-Soviet name *Homeland* to *Civil*, as in Department of Civil Security. And make civil-security spending what national-security spending was in the Eisenhower era, when interstate-highway-building and language-teaching were all part of “national defense”: an umbrella for investments in new energy and water supplies, public health, basic research, and other efforts that will actually make us more secure. ■

James Fallows is an Atlantic national correspondent.



11
CIVIL

END THE CORPORATE INCOME TAX

By Megan McArdle



THE CORPORATE INCOME TAX may be the stupidest tax we have. At 35 percent, America's levy on corporate income is one of the highest in the developed world. In 2007, about 2.5 million companies prepared lengthy returns at great expense, yet the tax generated only about 15 percent of total federal tax revenue. The tax on corporate profits discourages capital formation, targets shareholders regardless of their wealth, and fuels frantic, and costly, business efforts to dodge it. Among experts who study its effects, support for the tax is at best sort of sheepish. Yet as taxes go, it is relatively popular.

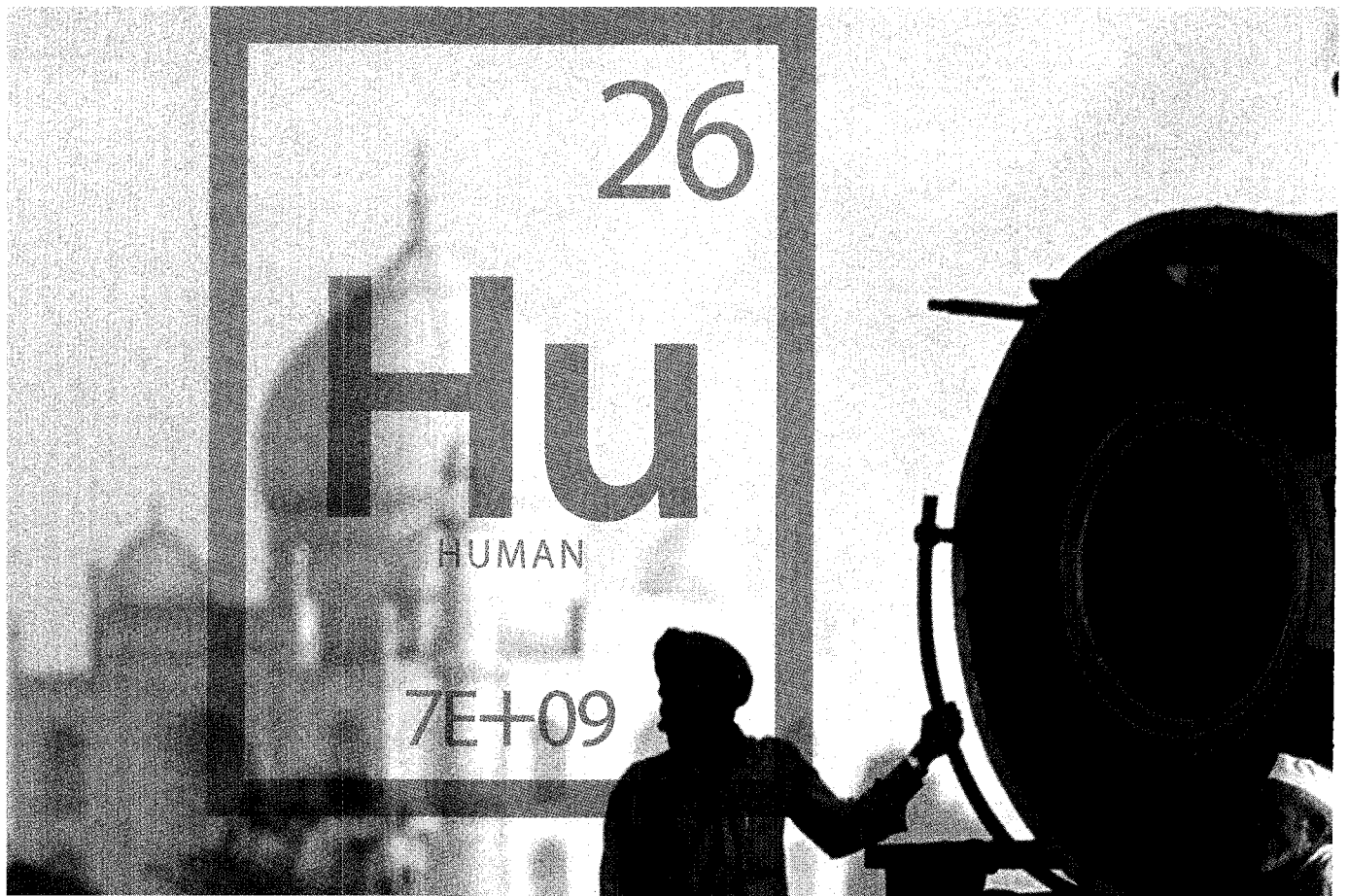
When confronted with all the economic costs of the tax, and its anemic contribution to federal coffers (even though in 2007, it accounted for a higher proportion of tax revenue than it did in 1985), its supporters generally call for “closing the loopholes.” But such efforts have historically only made the tax code more complex, raising compliance costs and creating new opportunities for avoidance.

By one estimate, what companies spend in complying with the tax equals almost 13 percent of the tax bill they owe—and that's the smallest drawback. Corporations go to extraordinary lengths to avoid taxes. Entire investment-banking firms and law practices have been built solely for the purpose of creating valuable tax deductions, and they employ highly educated and skilled people who could make a greater contribution to society by ... well, doing almost anything else, really.

But the most compelling reason to eliminate the corporate income tax is that it doesn't target those with the most ability (or obligation) to pay. A company's owners won't necessarily be the ones who bear the tax—corporations might decide, for example, to pass on the cost of the tax to employees in the form of smaller bonuses. And even if you could guarantee that the fat-cat managers and the owners bear the brunt of the tax, those “owners” aren't necessarily rich—they could be retirees invested in pension funds, or small shareholders.

Democrats are looking at ways to lower the rate and “close loopholes” so that more corporate revenue, particularly profits earned abroad, gets hit by the tax. But Uncle Sam could collect at least as much revenue in a more progressive and less distorting manner by eliminating the thing entirely, and raising taxes on capital-gains and dividend income (which were previously kept low to ease the negative impact of “double taxation”—taxing corporate profits first as corporate income, and then again as shareholder income). That might not provide the moral thrill of demanding that corporations cough up their “fair share.” But with so many real advantages, it's an idea that both left and right ought to be able to get behind. ■

Megan McArdle is The Atlantic's business and economics editor, and the editor of business.theatlantic.com.





REDESIGN THE DOLLAR

By Michael Bierut

THE QUICKEST FIX for a brand in trouble, some say, is nothing more than a cosmetic makeover. That may be a cliché, but with our financial system in crisis, the time is right to redesign the currency of the United States. Anyone trying to understand our national values would be baffled by the rococo Victoriana and Masonic mumbo jumbo that festoon a dollar bill. Are they an apt metaphor for the labyrinthine workings of the world of credit-default swaps and collateralized debt obligations? Perhaps. But the result is anachronistic and illegible, as are the \$5, \$10, and \$20 bills, which have hardly been redeemed by the addition of those giant, grimly functional Helvetica numerals intended to simply (in the ugliest possible way) make the bills easier to tell apart. A piece of currency is the ultimate symbol. A more transparent, rational financial system deserves money that looks the part. With the economy bottoming out, it's time to start from scratch. ■

Michael Bierut is a partner at Pentagram Design.

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END THE VICE PRESIDENCY

By Matthew Yglesias

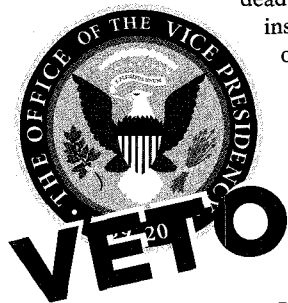
FOR MOST OF its history, the office of the vice presidency has been a curiosity rather than a danger, famous primarily for the disparaging witticisms leveled against it by its occupants. John Nance Garner observed that his job was not worth a bucket of warm piss. More decorously, Daniel Webster observed when turning down the post that he did not intend to be buried before he was dead. The very first vice president deemed the post "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived."

Lately, though, the vice presidency has gone from being irrelevant to being actively pernicious. The job was initially conceived as a consolation prize for the second-place finisher in presidential balloting, a scheme that almost immediately led to disaster, in the wake of the 1800 election. Thus we got the Twelfth Amendment, turning the VP into a powerless second banana, usually put on the ticket to provide regional "balance."

But recent decades have seen an effort, beginning in the Carter-Mondale administration and gathering steam during the Clinton-Gore years, to bestow some real powers on the veep. This trend reached its logical conclusion in the Dick Cheney era, which demonstrated that vesting vast, undefined power in a man who has little constitutional or statutory authority is even worse than paying someone a salary to do nothing.

Given that the office is at best worthless and at worst a threat to the republic, why don't we simply get rid of it? Obviously, having someone ready to take over in the event of a president's death is a necessity. Few roles could be more important. It's just not a full-time job. Let the secretary of state, or some other designated member of the Cabinet, shoulder the responsibility; we'd save the taxpayer a few dollars and spare the nation the absurd quadrennial spectacle of VP speculation, all at the cost of eliminating an office no one respects—and one whose occupant, ideally, does nothing at all. ■

Matthew Yglesias is a fellow at the Center for American Progress.



TEACH DRINKING

By John McCardell

HIGH-SCHOOL SENIORS tend to hold romantic notions of college life: newfound freedoms, enlightenment, keg-fueled free-for-alls. But the last attraction has lately achieved a new prominence: at one major university, student visits to the emergency room for alcohol-related treatment have increased by 84 percent in the past three years. Between 1993 and 2001, 18-to-20-year-olds showed a 56 percent jump in the rate of heavy-drinking episodes. Underage drinkers now consume more than 90 percent of their alcohol during binges. These alarming rates have life-threatening consequences: each year, underage drinking kills some 5,000 young people and contributes to roughly 600,000 injuries and 100,000 cases of sexual assault among college students.

The way our society addresses this problem has been about as effective as a parachute that opens on the second bounce. Clearly, state laws mandating a minimum drinking age of 21 haven't eliminated drinking by young adults—they've simply driven it underground, where life and health are at greater risk. Merely adjusting the legal age up or down doesn't work—we've tried that already and failed. But federal law has stifled the ability to conceive of more creative solutions in the only place where the Constitution says such debate should happen—in the state house—because any state that sets its drinking age lower than 21 forfeits 10 percent of its federal highway funds. This is called an "incentive."

So what might states, freed from this federal penalty, do differently? They might license 18-year-olds—adults in the eyes of the law—to drink, provided they've completed high school, attended an alcohol-education course (that consists of more than temperance lectures and scare tactics), and kept a clean record. They might even mandate alcohol education at a young age. And they might also adopt zero-tolerance laws for drunk drivers of all ages, and require ignition interlocks on their cars. Such initiatives, modeled on driver's education, might finally reverse the trend of consumption by young people at ever earlier ages. Binge drinking is as serious a crisis today as drunk driving was two decades ago. It's time we tackled the problem like adults. ■

John McCardell is a president emeritus and a professor of history at Middlebury College.



BUY TO LAST

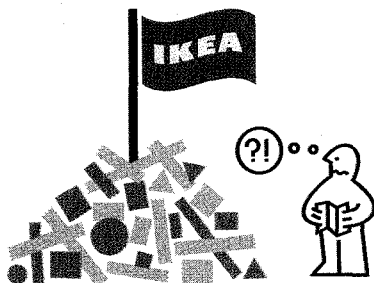
By Ellen Ruppel Shell

EVERYONE LOVES A BARGAIN, as long as we believe it's in good taste. And nobody does low-price, high-style better than IKEA, the world's largest furniture retailer. IKEA passes as the anti-Wal-Mart: a company where value and good values coexist. It uses design as a proxy for quality, and its brand—embodied by all those smiling, white-teethed Scandinavians standing next to smooth, shiny modular furniture with unpronounceable names—as a passport to a guilt-free world of low prices.

But put down your 59-cent Färgrik coffee mug and ask yourself: Can we afford to keep shopping at places where an item's price reflects only a fraction of its societal costs?

IKEA designs to price, challenging its talented European team to create ever-cheaper objects, and its suppliers—most of them in low-wage countries in Asia and eastern Europe—to squeeze out the lowest possible price. By some measures the world's third-largest wood consumer, IKEA proudly employs 15 “forestry monitors.” Eight of them work in China and Russia, but illegal logging is widespread in those vast countries, making it impossible to guarantee that all wood is legally harvested. (The company declines to pay a premium to ensure that all timber is legally harvested, citing costs that would be passed along to the consumer.) IKEA furniture made of particleboard and pine is not meant to last a lifetime; indeed, some professional movers decline to guarantee its safe transport. But to be fair, creating heirlooms is not IKEA's goal. Nor, despite a lot of self-serving hoopla, is energy conservation: the company boasts of illuminating its stores with low-wattage lightbulbs but positions outlets far from city centers, where taxes are low and commuting costs high—the average IKEA customer drives 50 miles round-trip. Cleverly, IKEA transfers transport and energy costs onto consumers, who are then handed the additional burden of assembling their purchases. Designed but not crafted, IKEA bookcases and chairs, like most cheap objects, resist involvement: when they break or malfunction, we tend not to fix them. Rather, we buy new ones. Wig Zamore, a Massachusetts environmental activist who was recently recognized for his work by the Environmental Protection Agency, is working with IKEA and supports some of the company's regional green initiatives. But as he put it, “IKEA is the least sustainable retailer on the planet.” And in real costs—the kind that will burden our grandchildren—that also makes it among the most expensive. **A**

Ellen Ruppel Shell is an Atlantic contributing editor and the author of *Cheap: The High Cost of Discount Culture*.



TRAIN DETROIT

By Bruce Selcraig

FANS OF HIGH-SPEED RAIL seem to be in two camps about the Obama administration's plan to give states a record \$8 billion in federal stimulus money to develop fast trains. After eight years of willful train-neglect under President Bush, most are grateful for any resources they can get. But some predict the relative chump change—AIG and Citibank got 55 times as much, roughly \$460 billion—will be diluted across so many fledgling rail projects that no state will end up with a top-of-the-line system that could provide thousands of new jobs and an envy-inducing model for America. Even completing one desirable high-speed project, the 800-mile north-south California route, is likely to cost \$45 billion.

Instead of scattering nickels and dimes across dozens of states, a better idea would be to increase the train fund at least tenfold so America can have at least one legitimate high-speed rail line like Spain's Madrid-to-Seville train, which runs at 186 mph (Amtrak averages only 79 nationwide). And let this man-on-the-moon project start in Detroit.

Yes, Detroit. The city that was once part of FDR's “Arsenal of Democracy,” for its part in retooling auto plants to make World War II tanks and bombers, has easily a dozen empty auto plants that could be making train engines and train cars.

In Flint, Michigan, United Auto Workers Local 651 President Art Reyes says Plant Six at the Delphi Flint East site, which once made air filters and has been idle since September 2008, offers 500,000 square feet, 45-foot ceilings, 26-inch-thick concrete floors, fiber-optic wiring, and, conveniently, a rail line.

“I have a workforce of 900 that's been downsized from 9,000,” says Reyes, “but every one of them is computer-literate and ready for cutting-edge, green-technology stuff, whether it's wind turbines, next-generation auto batteries, or rail. We're hungry for work.”

Of course, railroads helping to rescue Detroit would be sweet irony. It was General Motors, after all—in cahoots with a number of other companies—that set out to cripple mass transit in America, including the electric streetcars that once trundled through Detroit and Flint. **A**

Bruce Selcraig, a former Senate investigator and *Sports Illustrated* writer, is a journalist in Austin, Texas.

THE DEFINITIVE *Middle East cliché* is “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” With Shiite Iran growing stronger, Jews and Sunni Arabs suddenly have a potent basis for friendship. Could leveraging Sunni fears of rising Shiite power finally solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem? The case for a Sunni-Jewish alliance.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HOW IRAN COULD SAVE THE MIDDLE EAST

By Jeffrey Goldberg

NOT LONG AFTER the “Mission Accomplished” phase of the Iraq War, I attended a dinner in Ramallah, the capital of the rump state of Palestine, hosted by a sophisticated and aggressively secular leader of Fatah, the main faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The guests were like-mindedly secular, and the conversation was amiable and reality-based, until someone raised the subject of what George W. Bush’s actual goals in the Middle East might be. The host, growing angry, accused Bush of harboring entrenched and violently pro-Shia sympathies. I said that this was implausible, for any number of reasons. Another guest, an official of the Palestinian Authority, agreed with our host. He argued that the Bush administration was secretly motivated by a desire to establish a Shia state in the Arab heartland in order to create a new Washington-Baghdad-Tehran axis. Such an axis would replace the existing Washington-Riyadh-Amman-Cairo axis, and would serve both America’s oil interests and its desire for vengeance against the radical Sunnis who attacked America on September 11, 2001.

Very Kissingerian in its amoral convolution, and undoubtedly beyond the capacities of the planning branches of the Bush administration.

Then the real issue erupted into view.

“The Shia are apostates,” the host said. “Bush is giving power to apostates. They want to use Iraq as a base to convert Sunnis.”

This man, in a previous, Beirut-based life, had been a

Marxist, so I couldn’t understand why the particular brand of opiate mattered to him. To these secular men, I thought, the assorted confessional categories—Shia, Sunni, Sufi, and for that matter Presbyterian and Lubavitcher—were interchangeable and identically passé. I asked if his problem might be ethnic, rather than religious: Iran is Persian, not Arab, and the two civilizations are historically competitive. “Of course,” came the answer, but I was missing the subtlety: a Palestinian cannot become Persian, but he can become Shia. And this, to a Sunni Muslim—even to a wine-drinking, pork-eating Marxist Sunni Muslim—is a reprehensible idea.

This dinner occurred shortly after 2 million Shia had visited Karbala, a Shia holy city in Iraq, to commemorate the martyrdom of a crucial Shia saint. It was the first time so many Shia had gathered in Karbala in recent memory; Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, had prevented such gatherings. President Bush saw this as a triumph: “Many Iraqis are now reviving religious rituals which were forbidden by the old regime,” he said. “See, a free society honors religion.” But the sight of such Shia power, however moving to George Bush, was intensely upsetting to America’s Sunni allies in places like the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. At dinner that night, the message, in its purest distillation, was simple: Who do these uppity Shia think they are?

Shiism, whose followers constitute a mere 15 percent of the world’s 1.4 billion or so Muslims, long ago acquiesced to second-class status in the Arab world. But then came 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini seized power in Iran and sought to export the ideology of his country’s Islamic revolution

Iran's rise has alarmed Jews and Arabs alike—and perhaps provided the basis for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

to Muslims everywhere, even to Sunni Muslims. It was an unlikely goal. Centuries of blood-spattered encounters, prompted by deeply felt doctrinal differences, made Khomeini's vision seem fantastical.

Most Westerners are insensitive to these doctrinal differences, viewing them as dry technicalities rather than matters of cosmological importance. The Sunni-Shia split dates back to the seventh-century dispute over who was meant to be the Prophet Muhammad's rightful successor. Today's Shia are descended from those who believed that Muhammad had chosen his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, as his heir. This was a minority view in the days following the prophet's death, and one of his lieutenants, Abu-Bakr, was made caliph and successor to Muhammad instead. The schism became permanent after the Battle of Karbala in 680, when Ali's son Hussein was killed by the caliph's soldiers.

The conflict between Sunni and Shia is the most consequential in the Middle East because it is so profound and elemental. But precisely because it is so intractable, it might hold the key to solving another seemingly eternal Middle East conflict, the one between Muslim and Jew. The definitive Middle East cliché is, of course, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Well, it turns out that today, more than at any other time in the ruinous 100-year encounter between Arabs and Jews on the strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the two parties in the dispute have a common enemy: the Shia Persian Islamic Republic of Iran. President Obama's skills and charisma just might bring Sunni Arabs and Israeli Jews together, but he will be helped

inestimably if he considers that the road to peace runs not through Jerusalem but through Karbala. Consider the possibility of a grand, if necessarily implicit, Jewish-Sunni alliance as a gift to Obama from his predecessor.

My dinner companions were wrong; George Bush did not mean, by invading Iraq, to empower Iran. But they were right about the war's effect: Bush is the inadvertent father of the first Arab Shia state. And the foothold he provided Iran in Arab Iraq has made Tehran a surging power in the Persian Gulf.

At a Pew Forum discussion on Iran and the Middle East last December, Vali Nasr, the Iran expert (and adviser to Richard Holbrooke, the State Department's envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan), talked about the rise of Iran, and the marginalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nasr argued, convincingly, that most Arab states have a deeper interest in containing Iran than they do in containing Israel. "Once upon a time we used to think—and some people still do—that the Arab-Israeli conflict is the key to solving all the problems of the region: terrorism, al-Qaeda, Iran, and Iraq," he said. "I think the Persian Gulf is the key to solving the Arab-Israeli issue. All the powers that matter—Iran, Saudi Arabia, and even the good news of the region: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, etc.—are all in the gulf. And all the conflicts that matter to us—Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran—are in the gulf and then to the east."

Israel, of course, considers Iran a threat to its existence. "Can Israel flourish—survive and flourish—in a Middle East in which Iran, under its current leadership, is nuclear?" asked Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, when I

visited him earlier this spring. "I think it's much better not to get to that point."

The remarkable thing about this moment in the Middle East is that Arab leaders speak about Iran more critically than even Netanyahu does. In March, Morocco broke diplomatic relations with Iran over what it claimed were attempts by Iranian Shia to convert Moroccan Sunnis; in Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak's intelligence services spent the spring breaking up Hezbollah cells (Hezbollah being the Lebanese Shia proxy of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps). "Even if we forget that Iran is trying to obtain a nuclear capability, all gulf and Arab countries are extremely unhappy with the Iranian involvement in our region," a senior official of the United Arab Emirates recently told me. "We see this today in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Yemen. We just saw the Moroccans breaking diplomatic ties with Iran because of that. We've been seeing that in one way or the other in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Sudan."

In 2006, Mubarak accused Arab Shia of being loyal to Iran. "Definitely Iran has influence on Shiites," he said. "Shiites are 65 percent of the Iraqis. Most of the Shiites are loyal to Iran, and not to the countries they are living in." And Yusuf Qaradawi, a leading Sunni scholar, said last year, "Shiites are Muslims, but they are heretics, and their danger comes from their attempts to invade Sunni society. They are able to do that because their billions of dollars trained cadres of Shiites proselytizing in Sunni countries."

Shimon Peres, the Israeli president, recently told me that he has sensed an oncoming revolution in Sunni thinking. "For the first time, the majority of the Arab world thinks that Iran is the real danger, not Israel. Seventy percent of the Arabs are Sunnis. The Sunnis look upon us, whether they say it or not, not as a problem but as a hope."

Peres may be overstating, but moderate Arab leaders would obviously like a Sunni-Jewish alliance: Israeli compromise—an agreement, for instance, to freeze settlement growth on the West Bank—would prove to their pro-Palestinian constituents that Arab states, and not Iran, are guarantors of Palestinian interests, and it would allow them to deepen their subterranean military-intelligence connections with Israel on the Iran question. Such an alliance has even more obvious strategic advantages for Israel: Netanyahu has said he will lobby Europe, China, and Russia on the necessity for strong action to stop the Iranian nuclear program. His case would be strengthened immeasurably if he could make these arguments in concert with Arab leaders.

SO, HOW TO make use of what the Middle East expert Martin Indyk calls the "symbiotic anxiety" shared by Israel and its Sunni Arab adversaries?

It might be too late, of course, to forge a Sunni-Jewish alliance, though not because the two parties hate each other; hate has never stopped the formation of pragmatic alliances in the Middle East. It might be too late because the Arab enmity for Israel in the wake of last December's Israeli attacks in Gaza might make it impossible for Arab governments to be seen entering even a tacit alliance with Israel. "It's a good time in theory for something like this, but it won't happen now unless Israel makes certain strategic

decisions to bring real compromises to the table," says Abdel Monem Said Aly, of the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, in Cairo. "It is a difficult situation because Iran has presented itself as a guardian of Islamic and, in particular, Palestinian interests by taking the maximum stands, however hollow. If Israel and the Palestinians can be seen making progress, there is a chance. But this requires Israel to rethink its strategic priorities."

There are other reasons why such an alliance could prove to be chimerical. Half of the future state of Palestine is under the control of a Sunni fundamentalist group, Hamas, that is theologically opposed to the Shia dogma, but more than happy to take Iranian money and weapons. In April, an Arab leader told me he expects Iran to continue encouraging Hamas—as well as the Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon—to subvert any upcoming negotiations. "There will be another round of the Israeli-Iranian war this year," he predicted.

Which makes the effort to forge an alliance between Israel and its Arab adversaries even more vital. Trust-building steps must be taken more or less concurrently, but Israel is in a position to make a first, decisive step, by freezing settlement growth on the West Bank. Arab leaders who don't now have diplomatic relations with Israel are ready to reciprocate with direct flights between their capitals and Tel Aviv, and a host of other symbolic yet important moves. But there is an even more dramatic way to move forward on the peace process, while at the same time marginalizing Iran: demarcate the future borders of the state of Palestine. David Makovsky, one of the most respected experts on the peace process (and the co-author of a new book, *Myths, Illusions, and Peace*, about how to revive the process), suggests that freezing settlements should not become an end in itself. "There is a convergence of interests between the Arabs and Israelis on Iran. As such, this moment is a gift that shouldn't be wasted," Makovsky says. "The two sides need to put their differences in perspective to address the common challenge." He suggests leapfrogging the settlements issue and moving to border demarcation. "This is not like the issues of Jerusalem and the status of refugees or security arrangements," he said. "Both sides have already come very close on the West Bank land issue." The former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, before leaving office, suggested that the future state of Palestine be built on 93 percent of the West Bank, and receive additional territory from Israel in a land swap.

The history of Middle East peacemaking is littered with missed opportunities, and the shared challenge of an ascendant Iran might not be enough to induce Arabs and Israelis to make common cause. Martin Indyk recalls that Yitzhak Rabin argued at the beginning of the Oslo peace process "that Iran represented the real threat to Israel, and so it made sense for Israel to make peace with the Palestinians and their Arab allies in order to face together the threat from Iran." We know how Oslo ended. On the other hand, there is a substantial difference between 1993 and this moment. "In the 1990s, the Arabs didn't feel the same pressure from Iran that Israel felt," Indyk says. "Today, thanks to our mistake in Iraq, the Arabs feel that pressure just as intensely." ■

Jeffrey Goldberg is an Atlantic national correspondent.

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AS THE THREAT of global warming grows more urgent, a few scientists are considering some radical—and possibly extremely dangerous—schemes for reengineering the climate by brute force. Their ideas are technologically plausible and quite cheap. So cheap, in fact, that a rich and committed environmentalist could act on them tomorrow. And that's the scariest part.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

MOVING HEAVEN AND EARTH

By Graeme Wood

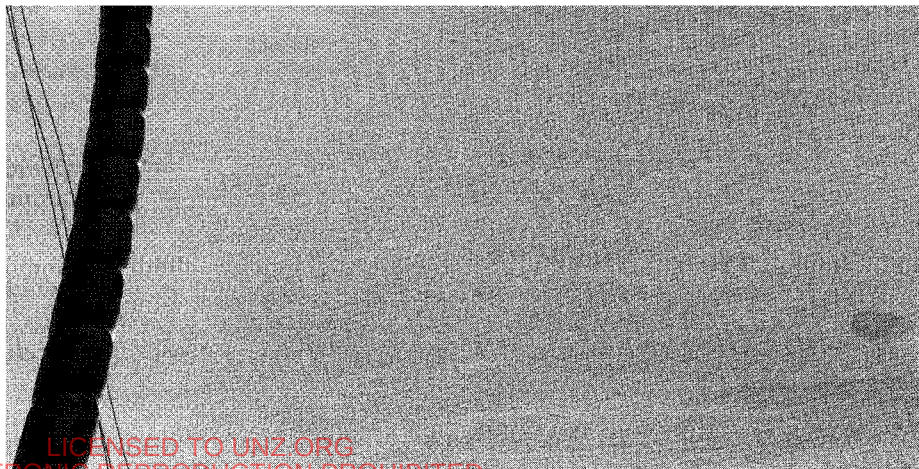
IF WE WERE transported forward in time, to an Earth ravaged by catastrophic climate change, we might see long, delicate strands of fire hose stretching into the sky, like spaghetti, attached to zeppelins hovering 65,000 feet in the air. Factories on the ground would pump 10 kilos of sulfur dioxide up through those hoses every second. And at the top, the hoses would cough a sulfurous pall into the sky. At sunset on some parts of the planet, these puffs of aerosolized pollutant would glow a dramatic red, like the skies in *Blade Runner*. During the day, they would shield the planet from the sun's full force, keeping temperatures cool—as long as the puffing never ceased.

Technology that could redden the skies and chill the planet is available right now. Within a few years we could cool the Earth to temperatures not regularly seen since James Watt's steam engine belched its first smoky plume in the late 18th century. And we could do it cheaply: \$100 billion could reverse anthropogenic climate change entirely, and some experts suspect that a hundredth of that sum could suffice. To stop global warming the old-fashioned way, by cutting carbon emissions, would cost on the order of \$1 trillion yearly. If this idea sounds unlikely, consider that President Obama's science adviser, John Holdren, said in April that he thought the administration would consider it, "if we get desperate enough." And if it sounds dystopian

or futuristic, consider that *Blade Runner* was set in 2019, not long after Obama would complete a second term.

Humans have been aggressively transforming the planet for more than 200 years. The Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric scientist Paul Crutzen—one of the first cheerleaders for investigating the gas-the-planet strategy—recently argued that geologists should refer to the past two centuries as the "anthropocene" period. In that time, humans have reshaped about half of the Earth's surface. We have dictated what plants grow and where. We've pocked and deformed the Earth's crust with mines and wells, and we've commandeered a huge fraction of its freshwater supply for our own purposes. What is new is the idea that we might want to deform the Earth intentionally, as a way to engineer the planet either back into its pre-industrial state, or into some improved third state. Large-scale projects that aim to accomplish this go by the name "geo-engineering," and they constitute some of the most innovative and dangerous ideas being considered today to combat climate change. Some scientists see geo-engineering as a last-ditch option to prevent us from cooking the planet to death. Others fear that it could have unforeseen—and possibly catastrophic—consequences. What many agree on, however, is that the technology necessary to reshape the climate is so powerful, and so easily implemented, that the world must decide how to govern its use before the wrong

SPLASHLIGHT



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nation—or even the wrong individual—starts to change the climate all on its own.

IF GEO-ENGINEERS HAVE a natural enemy, it is the sun. Their first impulse is to try to block it out. Stephen Salter, a Scottish engineer, has mocked up a strategy that would cool the planet by painting the skies above the oceans white. Salter's designs—based on an idea developed by John Latham at the National Center for Atmospheric Research—call for a permanent fleet of up to 1,500 ships dragging propellers that churn up seawater and spray it high enough for the wind to carry it into the clouds. The spray would add moisture to the clouds and make them whiter and fluffier, and therefore better at bouncing sunlight back harmlessly into space. Salter, who has investigated the technical feasibility of this idea minutely (down to the question of whether ship owners would mind affixing spray nozzles to their hulls with magnets), estimates the cost to build the first 300 ships—enough to turn back the climatological clock to James Watt's era—to be \$600 million, plus another \$100 million per year to keep the project going.

Roger Angel, an astronomy and optics professor at the University of Arizona, would block the sun by building a giant visor in space. He proposes constructing 20 electromagnetic

guns, each more than a mile long and positioned at high altitudes, that would shoot Frisbee-size ceramic disks. Each gun would launch 800,000 disks every five minutes—day and night, weekends and holidays—for 10 years. The guns would aim at the gravitational midpoint between the Earth and the sun, so that the disks would hang in space, providing a huge array of sunshades that would block and scatter sunlight and put the Earth in a permanent state of annular eclipse. Angel's scheme relies on launch technology that doesn't yet exist (no one has ever wanted to shoot Frisbees at the sun before), and would cost several trillion dollars. "I know it sounds like mad science," he says. "But unfortunately we have a mad planet."

Of all the ideas circulating for blocking solar heat, however, sulfur-aerosol injection—the *Blade Runner* scenario—may actually be the least mad. And it provides an illustrative example of the trade-offs that all geo-engineering projects of its scale must confront. The approach is already known to work. When Mount Tambora erupted in Indonesia in 1815 and spewed sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere, farmers in New England recorded a summer so chilly that their fields frosted over in July. The Mount Pinatubo eruption in the Philippines in 1991 cooled global temperatures by about half a degree Celsius for the next few years. A sulfur-aerosol project could produce a Pinatubo of sulfur dioxide every four years.

The aerosol plan is also cheap—so cheap that it completely overturns conventional analysis of how to mitigate climate change. Thomas C. Schelling, who won the 2005 Nobel Prize in economics, has pointed out how difficult it is to get vast international agreements—such as the Kyoto Protocol—to stick. But a geo-engineering strategy like sulfur aerosol "changes everything," he says. Suddenly, instead of a situation where any one country can foil efforts to curb global warming, any one country can curb global warming all on its own. Pumping sulfur into the atmosphere is a lot easier than trying to orchestrate the actions of 200 countries—or, for that matter, 7 billion individuals—each of whom has strong incentives to cheat.

But, as with nearly every geo-engineering plan, there are substantial drawbacks to the gas-the-planet strategy. Opponents say it might produce acid rain and decimate plant and fish life. Perhaps more disturbing, it's likely to trigger radical shifts in the climate that would hit the globe unevenly. "Plausibly, 6 billion people would benefit and 1 billion would be hurt," says Martin Bunzl, a Rutgers climate-change policy expert. The billion negatively affected would include many in Africa, who would, perversely, live in a climate even hotter and drier than before. In India, rainfall levels might severely decline; the monsoons rely on temperature differences between the Asian landmass and the ocean, and sulfur aerosols could diminish those differences substantially.

Worst of all is what Raymond Pierrehumbert, a geophysicist at the University of Chicago, calls the "Sword of Damocles" scenario. In Greek legend, Dionysius II, the ruler of Syracuse, used a single hair to suspend a sword over Damocles' head, ostensibly to show him how precarious the life of a powerful ruler can be. According to Pierrehumbert, sulfur aerosols would cool the planet, but we'd risk calamity the moment we stopped pumping: the aerosols would rain down and years' worth of accumulated carbon would make temperatures

HOMILY

Man has the will
to grieve
a week and no longer.

Ever the stranger,
he will kill
with righteous anger.

What does he believe?
In his right to trade
a season of greed

for an hour
of love in an unlit corner.
Such is love's power,

though it last no longer.
And such is his need
than which nothing is stronger.

—David Lehman

David Lehman is the editor of *The Oxford Book of American Poetry* (2006) and the author of seven collections of poems, including *When a Woman Loves a Man* (2005).

surge. Everything would be fine, in other words, until the hair snapped, and then the world would experience the full force of postponed warming in just a couple of catastrophic years. Pierrehumbert imagines another possibility in which sun-blocking technology works but has unforeseen consequences, such as rapid ozone destruction. If a future generation discovered that a geo-engineering program had such a disastrous side effect, it couldn't easily shut things down. He notes that sulfur-aerosol injection, like many geo-engineering ideas, would be easy to implement. But if it failed, he says, it would fail horribly. "It's scary because it actually could be done," he says. "And it's like taking aspirin for cancer."

IN 1977, THE PHYSICIST Freeman Dyson published the first of a series of articles about how plants affect the planet's carbon-dioxide concentrations. Every summer, plants absorb about a tenth of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In the fall, when they stop growing or shed their leaves, they release most of it back into the air. Dyson proposed creating forests of "carbon-eating trees," engineered to suck carbon more ravenously from the air, and to keep it tied up in thick roots that would decay into topsoil, trapping the carbon. He now estimates that by annually increasing topsoil by just a tenth of an inch over land that supports vegetation, we could offset all human carbon emissions.

Dyson's early geo-engineering vision addressed a central, and still daunting, problem: neither sulfur-aerosol injection nor an armada of cloud whiteners nor an array of space-shades would do much to reduce carbon-dioxide levels. As long as carbon emissions remain constant, the atmosphere will fill with more and more greenhouse gases. Blocking the sun does nothing to stop the buildup. It is not even like fighting obesity with liposuction: it's like fighting obesity with a corset, and a diet of lard and doughnuts. Should the corset ever come off, the flab would burst out as if the corset had never been there at all. For this reason, nearly every climate scientist who spoke with me unhesitatingly advocated cutting carbon emissions over geo-engineering.

But past international efforts to reduce emissions offer little cause for optimism, and time may be quickly running out. That's why a few scientists are following Dyson's lead and attacking global warming at its source. David Keith, an energy-technology expert at the University of Calgary, hopes to capture carbon from the air. He proposes erecting vented building-size structures that contain grids coated with a chemical solution. As air flows through the vents, the solution would bind to the carbon-dioxide molecules and trap them. Capturing carbon in these structures, which might resemble industrial cooling towers, would allow us to manage emissions cheaply from central sites, rather than from the dispersed places from which they were emitted, such as cars, planes, and home furnaces. The grids would have to be scrubbed chemically to separate the carbon. If chemists could engineer ways to wash the carbon out that didn't require too much energy, Keith imagines that these

structures could effectively make our carbon-spewing conveniences carbon-neutral.

The question then becomes where to put all that carbon once it's captured. Keith has investigated one elegant solution: put it back underground, where much of it originated as oil. The technology for stashing carbon beneath the earth already exists, and is routinely exploited by oil-well drillers. When oil wells stop producing in large quantities, drillers inject carbon dioxide into the ground to push out the last drops. If they inject it into the right kind of geological structure, and deep enough below the surface, it stays there.

We might also store carbon dioxide in the oceans. Already, on the oceans' surface, clouds of blooming plankton ingest amounts of carbon dioxide comparable to those taken in by trees. Climos, a geo-engineering start-up based in San Francisco, is trying to cultivate ever-bigger plankton blooms that would suck in huge supplies of carbon. When the plankton died, the carbon would end up on the sea floor. Climos began with the observation that plankton bloom in the ocean only when they have adequate supplies of iron. In the 1980s, the oceanographer John Martin hypothesized that large amounts of oceanic iron may have produced giant plankton

blooms in the past, and therefore chilled the atmosphere by removing carbon dioxide. Spread powdered iron over the surface of the ocean, and in very little time a massive bloom of plankton will grow, he predicted. "Give me half a tanker of iron," Martin said, "and I'll give you the next Ice Age." If Martin's ideas are sound, Climos could in effect become the world's gardener by seeding Antarctic waters with iron and creating vast, rapidly growing offshore forests to replace the ones that no longer exist on land. But this solution, too, could have terrible downsides. Alan Robock, an environmental scientist at Rutgers, notes

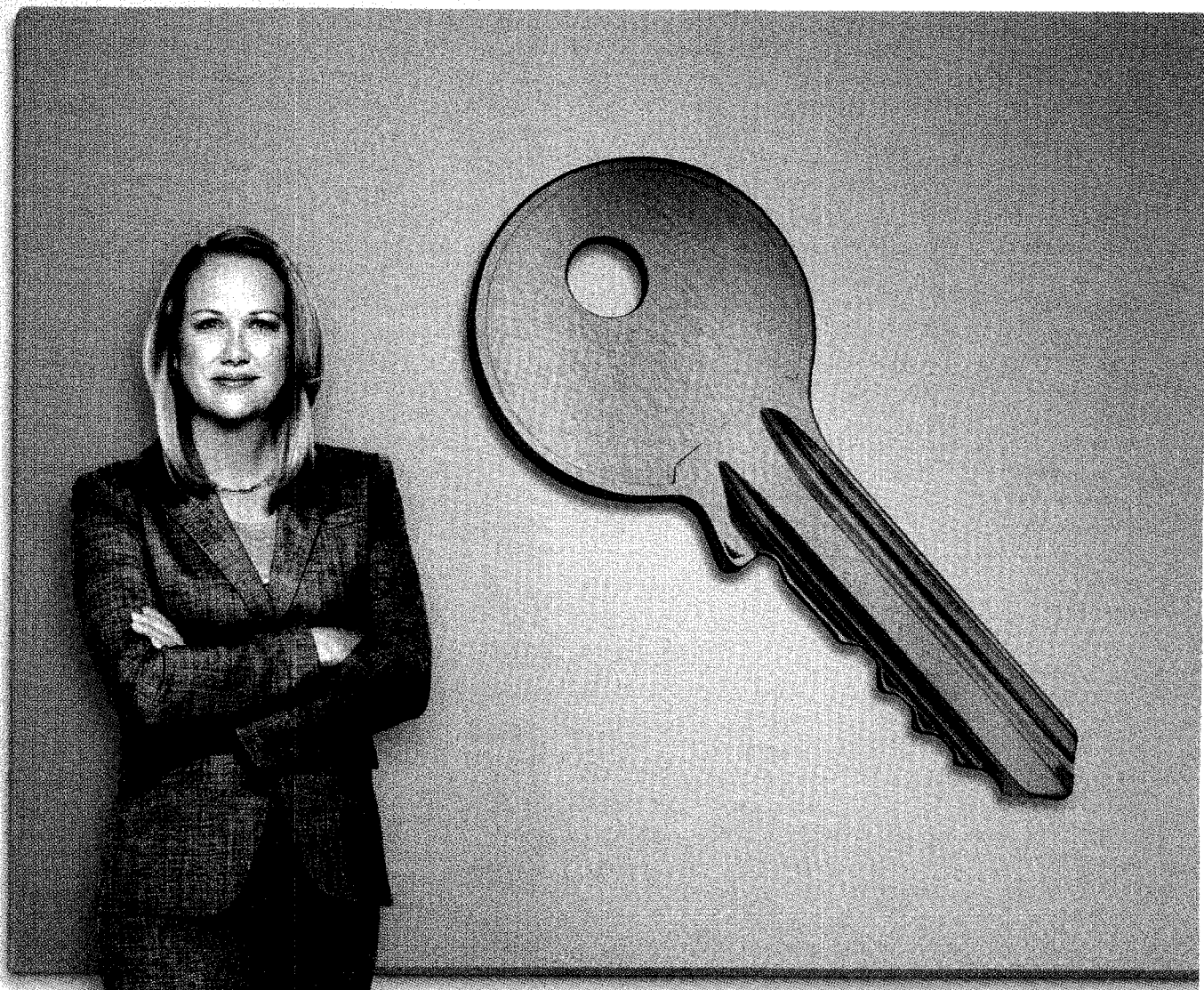
that when the dead algae degrades, it could emit methane—a greenhouse gas 20 times stronger than carbon dioxide.

Just a decade ago, every one of these schemes was considered outlandish. Some still seem that way. But what sounded crankish only 10 years ago is now becoming mainstream thinking. Although using geo-engineering to combat climate change was first considered (and dismissed) by President Johnson's administration, sustained political interest began on the business-friendly right, which remains excited about any solution that doesn't get in the way of the oil companies. The American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank historically inimical to emission-reduction measures, has sponsored panels on the sulfur-aerosol plan.

By now, even staunch environmentalists and eminent scientists with long records of climate-change concern are discussing geo-engineering openly. Paul Crutzen, who earned his Nobel Prize by figuring out how human activity punched a hole in the ozone layer, has for years urged research on sulfur-aerosol solutions, bringing vast credibility to geo-engineering as a result.

With that growing acceptance, however, come some grave dangers. If geo-engineering is publicly considered a "solution" to climate change, governments may reduce their efforts to

It is not like fighting obesity with liposuction: it's like fighting obesity with a corset, and a diet of lard and doughnuts.



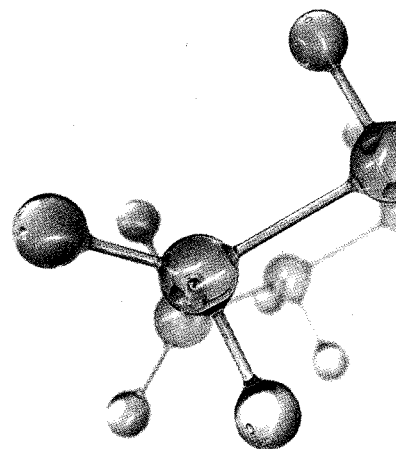
Pam Darwin
VP, Exploration

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restrict the carbon emissions that caused global warming in the first place. If you promise that in a future emergency you can chill the Earth in a matter of months, cutting emissions today will seem far less urgent. "Geo-engineering needs some government funding, but the most disastrous thing that could happen would be for Barack Obama to stand up tomorrow and announce the creation of a geo-engineering task force with hundreds of millions in funds," says David Keith.

Ken Caldeira, of the Carnegie Institution for Science, thinks we ought to test the technology gradually. He suggests that we imagine the suite of geo-engineering projects like a knob that we can turn. "You can turn it gently or violently. The more gently it gets turned, the less disruptive the changes will be. Environmentally, the least risky thing to do is to slowly scale up small field experiments," he says. "But politically that's the riskiest thing to do."

Such small-scale experimentation, however, could be the first step on a very slippery slope. Raymond Pierrehumbert likens geo-engineering to building strategic nuclear weapons. "It's like the dilemma faced by scientists in the Manhattan Project, who had to decide whether that work was necessary or reprehensible," he says. "Geo-engineering makes the problem of ballistic-missile defense look easy. It has to work the first time, and just right. People quite rightly see it as a scary thing."

THE SCARIEST THING about geo-engineering, as it happens, is also the thing that makes it such a game-changer in the global-warming debate: it's incredibly cheap. Many scientists, in fact, prefer not to mention just how cheap it is. Nearly everyone I spoke to agreed that the worst-case scenario would be the rise of what David Victor, a Stanford law professor, calls a "Greenfinger"—a rich madman, as obsessed with the environment as James Bond's nemesis Auric Goldfinger was with gold. There are now 38 people in the world with \$10 billion or more in private assets, according to the latest *Forbes* list; theoretically, one of these people could reverse climate change all alone. "I don't think we really want to empower the Richard Bransons of the world to try solutions like this," says Jay Michaelson, an environmental-law expert, who predicted many of these debates 10 years ago.

Even if Richard Branson behaves, a single rogue nation could have the resources to change the climate. Most of Bangladesh's population lives in low-elevation coastal zones that would wash away if sea levels rose. For a fraction of its GDP, Bangladesh could refreeze the ice caps using sulfur aerosols (though, in a typical trade-off, this might affect its monsoons). If refreezing them would save the lives of millions of Bangladeshis, who could blame their government for acting? Such a scenario is unlikely; most countries would hesitate to violate international law and become a pariah. But it illustrates the political and regulatory complications that large-scale climate-changing schemes would trigger.

Michaelson—along with many others—has called for public research on some possible legal responses to geo-engineering. "It would be a classic situation where the problem should be handled in an official capacity," he says. In practice, that would likely mean industrialized governments'

regulating geo-engineering directly, in a way that lets them monopolize the technology and prevent others from deploying it, through diplomatic and military means, or perhaps by just bribing Bangladesh not to puff out its own aerosols. Such a system might resemble the way the International Atomic Energy Agency now regulates nuclear technology.

And since geo-engineering—like nuclear weapons—would most likely be deployed during a moment of duress, legal experts like Victor have urged establishing preliminary regulations well in advance. "Suppose the U.S. or Brazil decided it needed some combination of emissions-cutting and geo-engineering in a sudden catastrophe," Victor says. "How would the rest of us respond? There's been no serious research on the topic. It has to be done right now, and not in a crisis situation." An outright ban on geo-engineering could lead other countries to try out dangerous ideas on their own, just as a ban on cloning in the United States has sent research to Korea and Singapore; it would constrain all but the least responsible countries.

Victor doesn't believe geo-engineering will solve anything by itself, but he expects that ultimately we will have a cocktail of solutions. Perhaps we could start with a few puffs of sulfur in the atmosphere to buy time, then forests of plankton in the ocean, and then genetically engineered carbon-hungry trees. What isn't an option, Victor says, is refusing to fund more research, in the hope that geo-engineering won't be needed.

Thomas Schelling, who won his Nobel Prize for using game theory to explain nuclear strategy and the behavior of states in arms races, shares Victor's frustration about the way geo-engineering has been ignored. Multinational agreements to cut emissions amount to a game of chicken that tends to end unhappily in Schelling's models. The ideal outcome would be a technology that changes the game. "We just have to consider that we may need this kind of project, and might need it in a hurry," he says. "If the president has to go by boat from the White House to the Capitol, we should be ready scientifically—but also diplomatically—to do something about it."

We should keep such images in mind. And they should remind us that, one way or another, a prolonged love affair with carbon dioxide will end disastrously. A pessimist might judge geo-engineering so risky that the cure would be worse than the disease. But a sober optimist might see it as the biggest and most terrifying insurance policy humanity might buy—one that pays out so meagerly, and in such foul currency, that we'd better ensure we never need it. In other words, we should keep investigating geo-engineering solutions, but make quite clear to the public that most of them are so dreadful that they should scare the living daylights out of even a Greenfinger. In this way, the colossal dangers inherent in geo-engineering could become its chief advantage. A premonition of a future that looks like *Blade Runner*, with skies dominated by a ruddy smog that's our only defense against mass flooding and famine, with sunshades in space and a frothy bloom of plankton wreathing the Antarctic, could finally horrify the public into greener living. Perhaps a Prius doesn't sound so bad, when a zeppelin is the alternative. ■

Graeme Wood is an Atlantic staff editor.



IT TURNS ON THE POWER (

IT FEELS LIKE 1977 *all over again: economy in the doldrums, crisis in the Middle East, and a charismatic new Democrat in the White House preaching the gospel of clean energy. Can Obama succeed where Carter did not? Yes—but only if we've learned the lessons of three decades of failure.*

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

BETTER LUCK THIS TIME

By Joshua Green

IN OCTOBER 1977, this magazine ran a cover story on the promising field of renewable energy. From today's vantage point, the article is noteworthy mainly for how uncannily its description of the country's energy crisis and possible solutions applies to the crisis we're in now.

The article took as its starting point the national debate that had arisen over a 29-year-old physicist named Amory Lovins, who had come to prominence a year earlier, when he published an essay in *Foreign Affairs* called "Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?" Lovins argued that the country had arrived at an important crossroads and could take one of two paths. The first, supported by U.S. policy at the time, promised a future of steadily increasing reliance on dirty fossil fuels and nuclear fission, and it carried serious environmental risks. At a time before Al Gore was even in Congress, Lovins noted: "The commitment to a long-term coal economy many times the scale of today's makes the doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration early in the next century virtually unavoidable, with the prospect then or soon thereafter of substantial and perhaps irreversible changes in global climate." He dubbed this "the hard path."

The alternative, which Lovins called "the soft path," favored "benign" sources of renewable power like wind and the sun, along with a heightened commitment to meeting energy demands through conservation and efficiency. Such a

heterodox blend of clean technologies, Lovins argued, would bring a host of salutary effects: a healthier environment, an end to our dependence on Middle East oil, a diminished likelihood of future wars over energy, and the foundation of a vibrant new economy.

The *Atlantic* cover story went on to examine emerging technologies, like solar energy, that lay at the heart of Lovins's vision. While refraining from outright prediction, the author's hopes were clear. In 1977, the country appeared poised on the brink of a new age, with recent events having organized themselves in such a way as to make a clean-energy future seem tantalizingly close at hand. A charismatic Democrat had come from nowhere to win the White House. Reacting to an oil shock and determined to rid the country of Middle East entanglements, he was touting the merits of renewable energy and, for the first time, putting real money into it—\$368 million.

But things peaked soon afterward, when Jimmy Carter installed solar panels on the roof of the White House. "A generation from now," Carter declared, "this solar heater can either be a curiosity, a museum piece, an example of a road not taken—or it can be a small part of one of the greatest and most exciting adventures ever undertaken by the American people; harnessing the power of the sun to enrich our lives as we move away from our crippling dependence on foreign oil."

NOW WE HAVE our answer: museum piece. In one of the great acts of humiliating political symbolism, Ronald Reagan tore down the solar panels, which spent many years in purgatory before eventually finding their way to the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum in Atlanta, where they sit on display in silent reproach to all who drive Hummers and own high-wattage plasma television sets.

But having mostly followed the hard path since 1977, the world has started to register the dire climatic effects Lovins warned of. The concentration of atmospheric carbon, an important indicator of global warming, has shot from 280 parts per million in pre-industrial times to 386 ppm last year and appears to be accelerating. Most scientists agree that beyond some critical threshold, climate change is irreversible and probably catastrophic. But no one knows just where the threshold lies. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change takes 450 ppm as the benchmark, a level we're on pace to reach by mid-century—although the prognosis is grimmer than that would imply. Because the effects of atmospheric carbon take years to show up as higher temperatures, limiting concentration to 450 ppm requires halting emissions at current levels. This sudden imperative, coupled with the unlikelihood of action absent a major government intervention, has thrust national energy policy to the forefront of public debate for the first time since Lovins's heyday.

At least on a rhetorical level, a good portion of the country now seems eager to commit to the soft path. It probably helps that the last administration was synonymous with oil and coal. But last summer's spike in oil prices gave a nudge even to some who harbored Cheney-esque views of renewable energy. The recent changes in Washington have made a significant shift in the nation's energy policy a real possibility for the first time in years.

As before, a new Democratic president is touting clean energy, not only as the path to the future but as the key to economic revival. "To truly transform our economy, protect our security, and save our planet from the ravages of climate change," President Obama told Congress in February, "we need to ultimately make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy." Like Carter, he's putting federal money into the effort, but in an amount several orders of magnitude greater. The stimulus alone dumped \$167 billion in grants and loan guarantees for clean-energy and other projects onto the Department of Energy, dwarfing its \$27 billion annual budget to such a degree that its inspector general frantically warned that the department could buckle under the strain. There's even talk of refitting the White House with solar panels. In all sorts of ways, it feels like 1977 again.

Shortly after the inauguration, a friend up for several jobs in the new administration confessed that he yearned to wind up at the Department of Energy. "It's like NASA in the '60s," he

told me. "All the best and brightest want to be there." Obama's choice of Steven Chu, the Nobel laureate physicist, as secretary of energy only heightened the allure. In the early Obama era, romantic notions about making one's mark on history tend to take the form of helping recast America's economy, and by extension the world's, in a way that will head off global catastrophe. So we're back at the old crossroads, only with less time and more urgency to act.

Most talk of the climate problem takes place at the abstract level of a Davos panel—all global diagnoses and moral imperatives. The gritty practicalities of addressing it tend to get obscured. But any effort to engineer change on such a grand scale will be an unprecedented feat of business and government, and the spotty results of earlier attempts might give pause were they better known. Given how large our energy policy looms today, what has happened over the 32 years since *The Atlantic* first raised the issue of clean energy still draws surprisingly little notice.

On one level, this is understandable. Talking about conservation and energy efficiency in the context of the 1970s summons up images of monkish self-denial, a lifestyle of bulky sweaters and humiliatingly small foreign cars that's a lousy advertisement for the world of tomorrow. It's important to look back, though: Carter's efforts failed because of the way the government encouraged clean energy, not because it tried. And the effects of decisions he made could be felt as recently as last fall. The NASA-in-the-'60s analogy would be more apt had the moon landing followed several decades of misfires and crashes.

In the spirit of the original *Atlantic* article, I traveled to California—now, as then, the heart of the renewable-energy industry—to get a sense of what it will take to bring a green economy into being and meet President Obama's goal of reducing carbon emissions to 80 percent below their 2005 levels by mid-century.

THE BEST WAY to get an idea of what a green future might look like is to visit Silicon Valley. It's impossible to convey how otherworldly the place felt this spring. While the rest of the country suffered beneath the blackening clouds of recession, Silicon Valley buzzed with giddy anticipation that "cleantech," in local parlance, represents the next great economic boom. In a place that reveres its idols the way ancient Rome did, no less than the famed venture capitalist John Doerr has pronounced cleantech "the biggest economic opportunity of the 21st century." Today, Silicon Valley is the anti-Detroit.

The organizing principle behind clean technology is that the growing scarcity and higher cost of fossil fuels, coupled with environmental concerns, will drive society toward alternative sources of energy, with enormous wealth accruing to whoever can supply them. For the past century, U.S. energy policy aimed to promote cheap and abundant electricity, and the nation achieved this mainly by burning coal. More demand led to more power plants, built with little heed to pollution or performance. This gave rise to a modern power industry that not only emits enormous amounts of greenhouse gases but does so with remarkable inefficiency. (A typical coal-fired plant burns three lumps of coal to produce

one lump's worth of electricity; the rest goes up the chimney as waste heat.) Because coal, oil, and natural gas generate most of our electricity and won't disappear soon, cleantech is generally understood to consist of a "supply" side and a "demand" side. While one half of Silicon Valley is busy developing clean supplies of energy, the other half is working out ways to reduce demand for the dirty kind.

In the popular imagination, *green economy* evokes towering wind turbines, sleek electric cars, and acres of mirrors shimmering in the desert. Immediately upon arriving in the Valley, I felt it my professional duty to test-drive a cerulean-blue Tesla Roadster, the much-discussed plug-in electric sports car that does, indeed, go from zero to 60 in 3.9 seconds and turns heads like a Ferrari. It can also top 140 miles per hour on the highway. I hear.

But cleantech takes a seemingly endless array of forms, and a useful way to think about them is by their proximity to commercial readiness. On the supply side, wind and solar-thermal are the most advanced. In the right climate, both can be deployed at "utility scale," meaning that if it's breezy or sunny enough, a wind or solar farm can produce as much power as a coal-fired plant. "These are the technologies that are commercially available, ready to scale, and set to go today," Peter Le Lièvre, the co-founder of Ausra, a solar-thermal company in Mountain View planning a 177-megawatt facility in central California, told me. BrightSource, an Oakland competitor, is licensed to build 2,600 megawatts of capacity across 14 plants. Upon their completion, these solar-thermal plants will produce more energy in California than either of the state's nuclear facilities. And wind is among the most mature technologies: established companies like Vestas and GE operate vast wind farms, particularly in the West and Midwest. Burning of biomass, such as agricultural by-products, is another technology being put to use on a more limited scale.

A bit further out on the horizon are solar-photovoltaic, silicon-wafer, and thin-film technologies, all chasing what could become a \$1 trillion market for solar energy. Projecting commercial viability gets dicey here. But further out still are options like geothermal energy and biofuels, which might someday replace oil. At Solazyme, a South San Francisco company that engineers advanced biofuels from algae, I was shown a 55-gallon drum of algal jet fuel and then invited to sample a vial of more algae, which had been tweaked to make a tasty cooking oil.

Aside from the Tesla and a few other electric cars, demand-side cleantech lacks supply-side sex appeal. Not much of it would make the cover of *Popular Mechanics*. But measures like efficiency improvements hold the greatest potential for immediate impact. For instance, slightly more than half of the energy consumed in the United States goes to buildings: 12 percent for constructing them, and 39 percent for heating, cooling, and lighting them. "The easiest, fastest, most effective way to reduce energy demand is to hit buildings," Marc Porat, a serial entrepreneur in the "built environment" sector, told me. Porat's Serious Materials makes high-efficiency windows and low-energy drywall; CalStar Cement uses fly ash to make low-carbon bricks and cement; ZETA Communities puts up town houses with minimal carbon footprints.

Mundane though they may seem, improvements in commercial lighting, programmable thermostats, televisions, and refrigerators could yield enormous savings in cost and carbon. Modest improvements in auto fuel efficiency could save as much oil as we import annually from the Persian Gulf.

Most of these gains would be imperceptible to consumers; others would register as lower utility bills and better service. At Silver Spring Networks in Redwood City, Raj Vaswani, the chief technology officer, showed me one of the company's smart meters, which "talk" to the grid and can moderate energy consumption during periods of peak demand—by, for instance, letting your refrigerator warm up by a degree or two—thus heading off blackouts and lowering your electric bill. When we met, Vaswani was excited because a West Coast storm had knocked out power in an area outfitted with Silver Spring meters. Alerted to the outage by the meters, the power company had a truck on the road eight minutes before the first customer called. Previously, trucks had to wait until enough calls came in to let them triangulate the location of an outage.

Someday, all these technologies will come together. The Buck Rogers vision of the future is an electricity "ecosystem" built on a smart grid through which bountiful forms of clean, domestic power course into stylish electric vehicles and abstemious buildings outfitted with smart appliances that can run the dishwasher or dry the laundry at whatever time of day power is cheapest (in the future, rates will float to reflect demand), thereby lowering your already scandalously low and guilt-free energy bill even farther. Blackouts and price spikes, like Dick Cheney and Enron, will be relics of a distant age, and Jimmy Carter will be fondly recalled as a man ahead of his time.

"The problem 30 years ago was that doing something environmentally sound required asceticism and sacrifice," Vaswani said. "That's no longer required. No one's asking you to huddle in the dark, shivering and eating beans by candlelight, to save the planet. As technology advances, giving us this command-and-control network and lowering the cost of renewables, we can reach a scale where you can use all the power you want. We'll make more."

The boundless optimism in Silicon Valley recalls the early days of the Internet boom. "Think of the smartest guy you've ever met and then imagine 50,000 more just like him innovating all at once," Mike Danaher, a partner and cleantech specialist at the law firm Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, told me. "Just as they did with telecom in the '90s, they're attacking every component of every kind of alternative energy to improve it."

Last year, cleantech was the third-largest recipient of venture funding, after IT and biotechnology, with investments of \$5.8 billion. But that statistic doesn't begin to convey its psychic significance. It's all anyone wants to talk about.

Exhilaration over clean energy has so thoroughly swept Silicon Valley that it has transformed the local culture. Conspicuous consumption has given way to conspicuous conservation. The favored status symbol is no longer the giant

yacht or the sprawling mansion but the home designed to be so ruthlessly energy-efficient that it generates its own power and produces a surplus that can be selflessly fed back into the grid. One top venture capitalist who showed me his Portola Valley home had embarked on such a project and then, after choosing the reclaimed stone and composting toilets, had succumbed completely to environmentalist fervor and kept right on going, contracting with a local nursery to grow the flora necessary for a "native play meadow" and bringing in a team of wildlife biologists, equipped with motion-sensitive night-vision cameras, to lure back to their natural habitat the elusive riverine tortoise and dusky-footed wood rat that once roamed the property. A documentary film is in the works.

The excitement extends to President Obama's early emphasis on renewable energy, which has convinced Silicon Valley's leading minds that here, at last, is a president who understands. "California is the new Texas," Danaher exulted. "There's a mind-set [in the White House] that innovation and entrepreneurship really can change things."

Everyone shares this excitement. But one thought tempers their enthusiasm. The Internet and social-networking booms of the '90s and '00s were self-contained affairs, whereas cleantech involves energy policy—which means Washington will have a lot to say about how things shake out. And they view Washington beyond Obama with profound ambivalence.

When I visited, Congress had just allotted billions to clean energy in the stimulus. Yet the trepidation was palpable. Into this precise, rational world of efficiency metrics and yield curves, a "beta factor" was about to be introduced, in the form of a government overhaul of energy policy. To the free-market idealists of Silicon Valley, the prospect of government's upending the marketplace—even a government run by one of the good guys—made people squirm. "Government shouldn't pick winners and losers" was their constant refrain.

Given the 32-year history of the country's fitful attempts to grow a green economy, the skepticism was just as rational as the science behind clean technology. Maybe more.

JUST OUTSIDE PALM SPRINGS, California, where the mountains part to create the San Geronio Pass, cool Pacific air sweeps toward the inland desert through acre after acre of rusting, derelict wind turbines that stretch to the horizon in orderly columns like soldiers in formation. They're remnants of Jimmy Carter's attempt to go green.

Adherents of clean energy usually explain its evolution in terms of technological advancements. But a better way to see the full picture is through the lens of bankruptcy. The corporate histories of the major manufacturers of clean technology—companies like Vestas, GE, and BrightSource—are littered with bankruptcies, sometimes several in succession, and most can trace their lineage to a specific act (or inaction) of government.

When the Arab oil embargo touched off concerns about

The perversity of the government's incentives for clean energy demanded a big balance sheet, huge profits, and an indifference to risk. Enter Wall Street.

energy security, two major impediments hindered the development of a domestic clean-energy industry. The first was that electric utilities controlled transmission lines and wanted no competition. The second was the prohibitive cost of developing and deploying the technologies. Carter addressed both problems in 1978 with an energy plan he characterized as “the moral equivalent of war.” He compelled public utilities to accept power from independent companies, such as those that might draw on wind or solar; and he made available, for the first time, subsidies for renewable energy in the form of an investment tax credit. Congress increased the subsidies two years later, after the second oil shock.

To these federal incentives, states added their own. None surpassed California’s combination of additional tax credits and regulatory arm-twisting—the law not only forced big utilities to buy power from renewable providers but made sure they did so at favorable rates. If you lived in California in the early 1980s, government would cover half the cost of a windmill and guarantee generous recompense for the power you produced. Soon enough, wind took off.

HEAVEN

Henry Thoreau’s last words: “Moose ... Indian.”

Joe DiMaggio’s: “I’ll finally get to see Marilyn.”

Henry died never having gone to bed with a woman.

Joe enjoyed dozens, but in the end loved only one,

& believed that after he’d signed his last ball or bat,
he’d find her waiting in Yankee Stadium in starlight.

Henry died younger, & wasn’t sure about the out-there,
except it sounded transcendently beautiful, whether

or not it was cognizant of him or was just a cowbell
thunking in the mind of the great Oversoul,

but if it at least proved amenable
to hounds, bay horses, turtledoves, what the hell.

Maybe Henry is in Joe’s penthouse, Joe in Henry’s cabin,
maybe Joe is writing books, Henry hugging Marilyn,

maybe Henry is hitting homers, & Joe is fishing Walden,
maybe Joe & Hank are pals, & Marilyn ecstatic with Emerson.

—William Heyen

William Heyen’s recent books include A Poetics of Hiroshima (2008) and Shoah Train: Poems (2003), a finalist for the National Book Award.

The first wind farms went up in the San Geronio Pass in 1981. Others soon followed. Turbines dotted the country, but in particular California. The demand led to a manufacturing boom, and new companies sprang up to meet it. “It was like the car industry in 1912,” Ed Zaelke, a project-finance partner specializing in renewable energy at the law firm of Chadbourne & Parke in Los Angeles, told me. “Everybody had a new invention.” Sales of wind power leapt from \$21 million in 1981 to \$748 million in 1985.

But the industry encountered serious quality-control issues, and one reason was the nature of the government’s support. A tax credit on investment created an incentive to put up turbines quickly and plentifully and collect a check. But the tax code had nothing to say about how those turbines performed. And many of them did not. “If you look at Palm Springs,” Zaelke said, “the turbines are set one alongside the other in corn rows because you got paid by how many you installed, not by how well they produced. Well, the ones in back don’t spin, because the ones in front absorb all of the wind and disperse it. That’s why today we space them and put them on ridgelines.”

These, at least, were good-faith efforts. Across California, wind became a popular tax shelter. Doctors, lawyers, and dentists began throwing up turbines or buying shares in hastily erected wind farms to take easy advantage of the benefits. “People were sawing surfboards in half and sticking them on a rotor to claim the tax credit,” Zaelke said.

That ended abruptly in 1985. Ronald Reagan, well on his way to slashing his predecessor’s largesse toward clean energy, killed the investment tax credit. Evidently, Reagan despised wind power. Having previously instructed the IRS to challenge the credit, he singled out California’s turbines as evidence of the need for reform when he sent Congress the 1986 Tax Reform Act. With oil flowing cheaply again, the industry swiftly collapsed.

Solar power benefited from the same credits and, beginning in 1980, had the additional sweetener of a California property-tax exemption to defray the cost of acres of mirrors. Motivated by these incentives and the emergence of “peak oil” theory, companies like Shell, Exxon, and Amoco became some of the largest investors in solar technology.

The great pioneer in the field was Arnold Goldman, an engineer lured to California from Israel by the promising economic climate. Goldman was an inventor, but a practical one. Rather than tinker in the lab, he studied Department of Energy research reports (a product of Jimmy Carter’s initial investment) to find the technology with the most potential. Goldman founded Luz International and got Southern California Edison to agree to buy power. With financing from Phillips Petroleum and Bank of America, he built the first utility-scale solar farm in the United States in 1984, a \$62 million facility that could generate 14 megawatts.

Part of the adventure for entrepreneurs like Goldman lay in continually refining the technology

to drive down cost. Luz was strikingly successful, and Goldman managed to keep building larger facilities even as the state and federal tax credits disappeared and the oil companies lost interest. "We were improving at a fast enough pace that each time one of the credits went away, we made up for it with cost savings from the new technology," he told me.

By 1991, Luz was operating nine facilities and had begun construction on a tenth when the California property-tax exemption—the one subsidy the company could not do without—came up for renewal. At the time, Luz's 354 megawatts of capacity represented 90 percent of the world's solar energy. Luz was literally peerless. But from a political standpoint, this created a problem: the solar property-tax exemption appeared to benefit a single company. "It was absolutely crazy," Goldman said. When the Republican governor vetoed the renewal, Luz went bankrupt. Its nine plants, now owned by Florida Power & Light, still run today. Goldman is now a principal behind BrightSource.

For the dwindling few companies that struggled on, the trouble didn't let up, arriving not only from the political right but also from the left. Kenetech Windpower, for instance, struggled with what the industry delicately refers to as "avian mortality." Remote, windy places like California's Altamont Pass are home to rare birds like the golden eagle, which nature did not equip to survive an encounter with a Kenetech turbine. In contrast to sensible Europeans, whose blades churned slowly, Americans, with our predilection for speed and power, produced windmills of such fearsome torque that they became, as one outraged Sierra Club lobbyist put it, "Cuisinarts of the air." To the horror of avian-minded environmentalists, eagle carcasses began piling up in the Altamont Pass. To those whose sympathies lay with wind, liability was the concern: mutilating golden eagles violated the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Kenetech first negotiated "killing permits" from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, then settled on the more permanent solution of going bankrupt.

Wind and solar didn't die when the tax credits dried up. They moved overseas. Denmark offered robust government support, and came to dominate the wind industry. Germany and Spain found success with solar energy by requiring utilities to pay hefty "feed-in tariffs"—above-market rates—to anyone who sent electricity to the grid. Japan also built a vibrant solar market.

Though its manufacturing base was devastated, the U.S. remained one of the world's largest markets for wind power. In 1992, Congress moved to rebuild the industry, this time basing the tax credit on production rather than investment. Again, the market took off—and collapsed, when the credits were allowed to expire. This boom-and-bust cycle repeated itself three more times over the next decade, and very nearly a fourth. Last fall, after 18 attempts to extend the production tax credit, Congress, in one of its final acts before adjourning, allowed a one-year extension to squeeze through.

Plotted on a graph, the history of clean-energy production in the United States resembles the blade of a saw, rising and falling each time subsidies came and went. Japan, Germany, Spain, and Denmark show smooth, upward-sloping yield curves, a reflection of consistent government policy.

DESPITE THESE PROBLEMS, new technologies gradually emerged, and caught the attention of investors whose patience exceeded Congress's fickle attention span. Flush from the Internet boom and intrigued with the opportunities presented by rising fuel prices, venture capitalists started betting on clean technology. The proliferation of states that require a portion of electricity to come from renewable sources suggested a growing market. Though it will have to compete for space in his obituary, George W. Bush, encouraged by Texas businessmen, signed what is regarded as a model renewable-energy standard while governor of Texas, in 1999; Texas easily beat it and now produces more wind power than Denmark.

The nature of venture-capital investing, which involves placing many bets in the hope that a few pay off, helped create today's array of clean technologies. But venture capitalists have been unable to replicate the explosion of growth in the Internet sector, because they aren't big enough to compete in the \$5 trillion U.S. energy market. Google required only \$25 million in venture capital to become the company it is today. A large wind or solar facility can cost upwards of \$500 million just to get started. "When you're talking power infrastructure, you're talking thousands of tons of steel and glass and giant turbines," says Peter Le Lièvre, the co-founder of Austra. "All the investors in Silicon Valley combined cannot put \$500 million into a project."

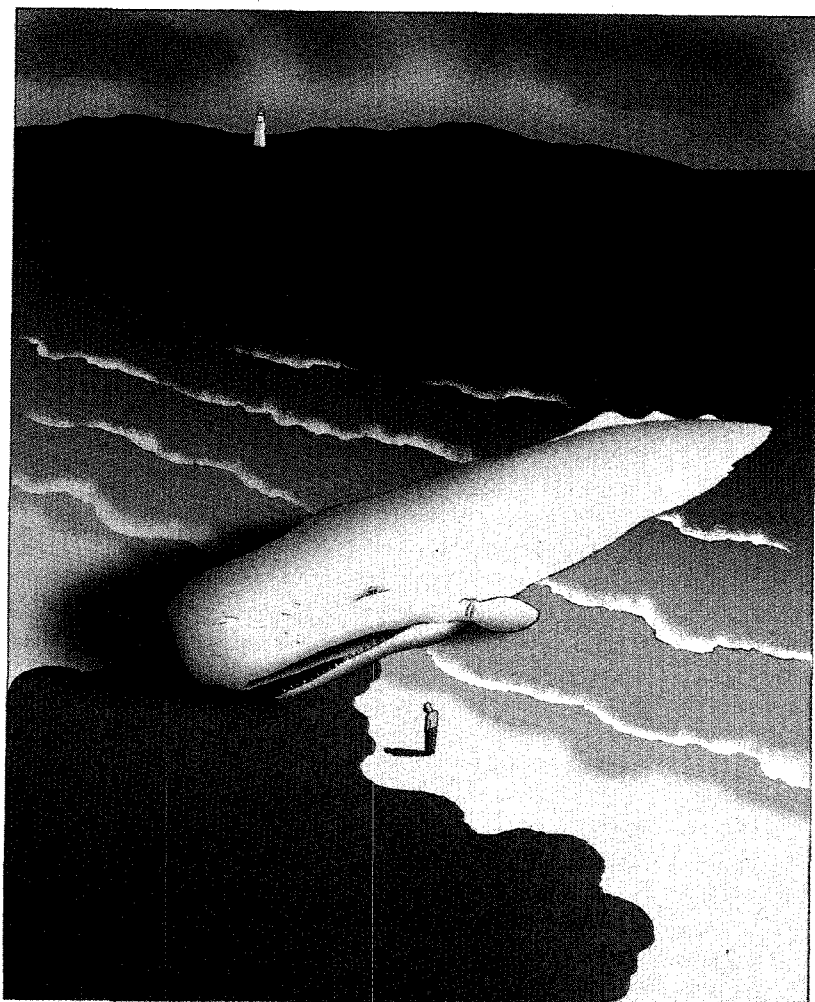
This poses a problem. Venture capitalists can bring an idea from the lab to pilot scale. But sooner or later the limitations of their balance sheets kick in. Many start-ups have made it this far only to die searching for additional financing. Venture capitalists have a term for this. They call it the "Valley of Death."

The nut of the problem traces all the way back to Jimmy Carter's choice of tax credits as the vehicle for subsidizing renewable energy. Direct grants would have been simpler. But Congress had recently changed the federal-budget process to keep closer track of how much money was being spent. It suddenly became easier to spend indirectly, by manipulating the tax code. Although no one realized it at the time, Carter's decision to use tax credits lit the very long fuse on a bomb that detonated last fall and nearly took down the entire renewable-energy industry in America.

The trouble with tax credits is that in order to make use of them, you must owe taxes, and most start-ups struggling toward profitability do not. So while a company looking to build a wind or solar facility would qualify for valuable benefits, it had no means of realizing this "tax equity." The work-around was to partner with someone who did, someone large enough to finance a \$500 million facility and profitable enough to incur a large tax bill. Having witnessed two decades of busts and bankruptcies, traditional U.S. banks wanted no part of this. European banks, going by their more positive experience, were comfortable funding large renewable projects, but didn't qualify for U.S. tax credits. The perversity of the government's incentives demanded a big balance sheet, huge profits, and an indifference to risk. Enter Wall Street.

Investment banks and hedge funds stepped in to fill the void, engineering tax-equity vehicles with suspiciously

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complicated-sounding names, like “partnership flip structure” and “inverted passthrough lease,” to exploit the tax benefits. These deals amounted to financing agreements for large infrastructure projects, given in exchange for tax credits, often worth hundreds of millions of dollars, that could be applied against profits earned primarily on other investments (like mortgage-backed securities). For renewable-energy companies, tax-equity deals meant life or death: the combination of credits could offset two-thirds of the capital cost of a project. Companies like Lehman Brothers, Wachovia, and AIG became an integral part—even *the* integral part—of the renewables industry, because the utility-scale projects they financed produce the overwhelming majority of clean energy in the United States.

Basing the entire system of federal incentives on tax equity had two weaknesses, one that has always been clear and another that became clear only recently. Forcing renewables companies to route government support through Wall Street, thereby sacrificing a portion of it, was needless and inefficient. But it also tied the industry’s fate to that of the financial world’s most aggressive players. Just as Wall Street bankers bet that housing prices could never fall and got wiped out when proved wrong, Congress seems never to have imagined that Wall Street might someday have no

profits and need no tax equity. Early last year, the multibillion-dollar tax-equity universe consisted of 18 providers. After September’s record carnage, the number dropped to four. Credit froze, and most projects ground to a halt. All of a sudden, not just a few start-ups but the entire renewable-energy industry was staring into the Valley of Death.

WHEN OBAMA TOOK office, the climate-change issue had a short-term and a long-term component. The immediate imperative was to find a way of rescuing the renewables industry from Wall Street’s collapse. This was important not just as a means of mitigating the recession but also because getting clean technology rapidly to scale is probably the only way to meet the larger goal of reducing carbon emissions enough to limit climate change. Another setback could make the difficult impossible.

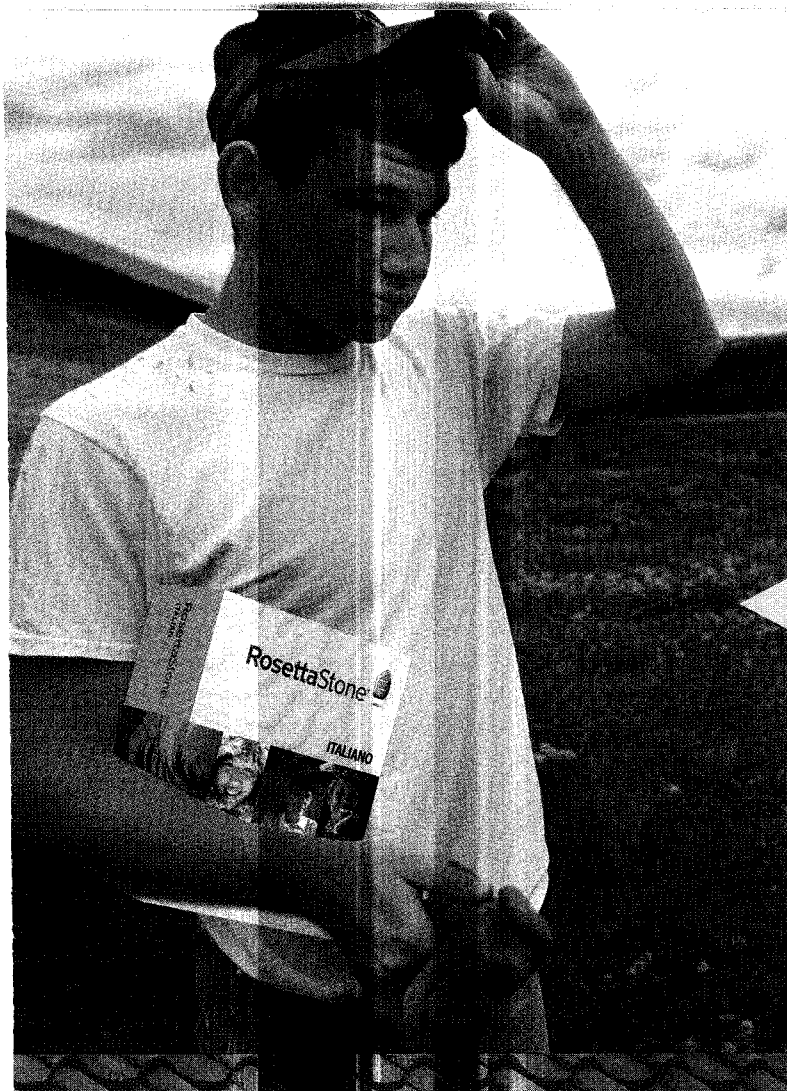
The stimulus was the first of three major initiatives intended to steer the economy toward something more like Amory Lovins’s soft path. To fill the tax-equity gap, the stimulus provides \$32.7 billion in direct grants and another \$134 billion in loan guarantees to attract new investors to large projects. To impose stability, it extends a variety of tax credits by anywhere from three to eight years.

Most striking of all, it instructs the Department of Energy to invest directly in promising cleantech companies (though the payoff comes in jobs and environmental gains, not equity). By a stroke of his pen, President Obama made a federal agency the world’s largest venture capitalist. When the official in charge of the program appeared at a Santa Barbara energy conference in March, he was mobbed by eager CEOs.

So far, so good. “The stimulus package essentially saved the renewable-energy industry in the United States,” says Raj Atluru, managing director of the venture-capital firm Draper Fisher Jurvetson.

The second part of the Obama plan, which Congress will consider as part of the energy bill this summer, is to make renewable-energy standards, like those already in place in Texas, California, and other states, national policy. This would put the force of law behind the effort to advance clean energy, and eliminate the possibility of another Reagan-esque reversal of course. The final and most significant component, also part of the energy bill, will be putting a price on carbon emissions, possibly by establishing a cap-and-trade system like the one featured in Obama’s budget.

All of this could be achieved and still fail to stop climate change—we won’t know for years. Beyond a broad consensus on the urgency of the threat, the inability to know precisely



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what can contain it has produced a range of expert opinion, from optimists convinced that steady government support of existing technology will suffice, to pessimists (they'd say "realists") who consider such support a necessary precondition, to which a great deal more will have to be added. Nathan Lewis, for instance, an energy chemist at the California Institute of Technology, foresees the need to develop 13,000 gigawatts of carbon-free power if we're to limit atmospheric carbon concentration to 450 ppm. (Current global solar-power production is 10 gigawatts.) And it will need to be cheap enough to persuade major polluters like China and India to go along. Steven Chu believes this will require "Nobel-caliber" scientific breakthroughs.

Everyone agrees on the need for the sustained focus missing from every earlier attempt to go green. But if that's not enough, then the important question becomes: Where is a Nobel-caliber breakthrough most likely to be made and what might be done to bring it about?

The U.S. record on renewable energy provokes a kind of sheepish embarrassment among many veteran adherents. The mid-1980s collapse brought down not just the domestic industry but many of the major foreign companies that had invested here. "You can certainly make the case that the policy the U.S. has followed over the last 30 years is exactly the policy you would *not* want to follow," Randy Swisher, the former director of the American Wind Energy Association, told me. Thus the tendency is to regard Carter as a naive optimist and the years between his presidency and *An Inconvenient Truth* as a kind of Dark Ages best forgotten.

But Carter's efforts can also be viewed as a qualified but important success. Despite its epic travails, the United States in the mid-1980s was the overwhelming leader in clean technology, with more than 80 percent of the world's wind capacity and 90 percent of solar. The entrepreneurial culture of California in particular drew the best minds from around the world. One of them, Arnold Goldman, was already building toward scale when it all came apart.

The United States has fallen back dramatically since then, both in a moral and an economic sense. As awareness of the climate threat has taken hold, we've drawn contempt, as much for President Bush's truculent dismissal of the Kyoto Protocol as for the amount of greenhouse gases we emit. Even President Obama's sharp change of course seems likely to win us, at best, a prodigal son's wary reception when representatives of 170 nations meet in Copenhagen in December to negotiate the next climate treaty. Meanwhile, the benefits of the developments that emerged in the 1980s have mostly accrued to others. "We sent the wind and solar industry to Europe for three decades," Raj Atluru says. "As a result, they have both a huge consumption market for renewable energy and the biggest companies that export the technology."

Europe offers a model of how governments can lead the transition to clean energy and thereby reduce demand for fossil fuels. Denmark, which also suffered the shocks of the 1970s, no longer needs to import oil. But missing from Europe's decades of leadership are big breakthroughs in creating renewable energy. The lack of an entrepreneurial culture is a big reason, and it is also why, despite commendable progress, Europe shouldn't be counted on to play the role of

savior in the event that Scandinavian practicality alone can't do the job. As an indicator of where a solution might emerge instead, venture-capital investments in clean technology last year reached \$5.8 billion in the United States, compared with \$1.8 billion in all of Europe and Israel. And that was before Obama's enormous ante.

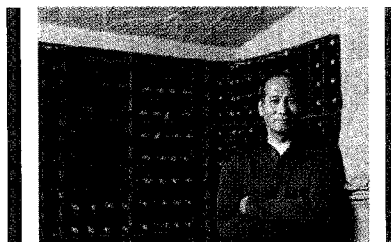
American capitalism—even when it's working—is not without its limitations, one being that promising ideas rarely get funding if their commercial potential lies beyond venture capitalists' 10-year investment horizon. The Energy Department research budget has never recovered from Reagan's cuts. And the private industry that would seem to have the most at stake in finding and controlling clean-energy advances—electric utilities—has never seriously pursued them, since a century of government policy has made the hard path so easy. People in cleantech circles often point out that the electric utilities spend a smaller portion of revenue on research and development than pet-food companies do. Here, too, the stimulus fills a gap. For years, Silicon Valley dreamed that government would cultivate nascent but potentially transformative energy ideas by creating an equivalent of the Pentagon's famous Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which pioneered such things as the Internet and GPS. With an eye toward similar breakthroughs, the stimulus allots \$400 million to the Department of Energy for just such an agency.

But the Internet came to fruition only after the right conditions were in place. Its rapid growth and innovation followed from the telecommunications reforms of the 1990s, a consequence few predicted at the time. "The trouble with projections is that they extrapolate from the current reality, and often end up undershooting the mark," Sunil Paul, a founding partner of Spring Ventures, a firm that invests in cleantech, told me. "Over the long haul, dramatic things happen to change the equation. As I like to put it, the history of our future is filled with moon bases, jet packs, and 200-mph cars, but has no cell phones, no Internet, and no laptop computers."

The interplay of technology, policy, and finance has always determined the rate at which clean technologies advance. Today these are aligned for the first time since Jimmy Carter—and more strongly now because the environmental imperative and global concern are so much greater than they were in 1977.

The key to our energy future lies in exploiting two often opposing forces without having them trample or undermine each other: Silicon Valley's free-market culture of innovation and Washington's power to set the terms by which everyone operates. The challenge will be to establish European-style stability without constraining ourselves to anemic European levels of innovation. And if it turns out that a Nobel-caliber breakthrough is necessary to save the planet, the freewheeling boom-and-bust disruptions of the 1980s might come to be regarded in a much better light—because, really, who else has produced such rapid change? It may seem strange to think so, but the last, best hope for heading off climate change is probably the same country that botched the job so badly once before. ■

Joshua Green is an Atlantic senior editor.



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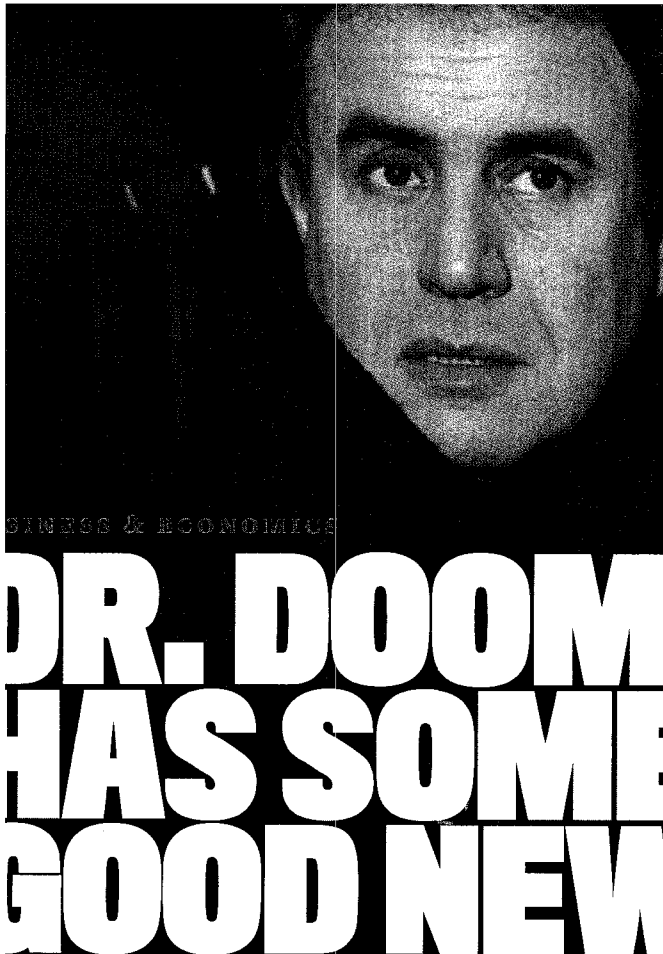
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N MARCH 28, 2007, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke appeared before the congressional Joint Economic Committee to discuss trends in the U.S. economy. Everyone was concerned about the "substantial correction in the housing market," he noted in his prepared remarks.

Fortunately, "the impact on the broader economy and financial markets of the problems in the subprime market seems likely to be contained." Better still, "the weakness in housing and in some parts of manufacturing does not appear to have spilled over to any significant extent to other sectors of the economy." On that day, the Dow Jones industrial average was above 12,000, the S&P 500 was above 1,400, and the U.S. unemployment rate was 4.4 percent.

That assurance looks bad in retrospect, as do many of Bernanke's claims through the rest of the year: that the real-estate crisis was working itself out and that its problems would likely remain "niche" issues. If experts can be this wrong—within two years, unemployment had nearly doubled, and financial markets had lost roughly half their value—what good is their expertise? And of course it wasn't just Bernanke, though presumably he had the most authoritative data to draw on. Through the markets' rise to their peak late in 2007 and for many months into their precipitous fall, the dominant voices from the government, financial journalism, and the business and financial establishment under- rather than overplayed the scope of the current disaster.

With the celebrated exception of Nouriel Roubini, an economist from the Stern School of Business of New York University. At just the time Bernanke was testifying about the "contained" real-estate problem, Roubini was publishing a paper arguing that the depressed housing market was nowhere near its bottom, that its contraction would be the worst in many decades, and that its effects would likely hurt every part of the economy. In September 2006, with markets everywhere still on the rise, he told a seminar at the International Monetary Fund's headquarters that the U.S. consumer was just about to "burn out," and that this would mean a U.S. recession followed by a global "hard landing." An economist who delivered a response dismissed this as "forecasting by analogy." The IMF's in-house newsletter covered Roubini's talk as a curiosity, under the headline "Meet Dr. Doom."

Roubini is thus enjoying his moment as the Man Who Was Right, a position no one occupies forever but which he is entitled to for now. As markets have collapsed, the demand for his views and predictions has soared. He travels constantly, and late this spring I met him in Hong Kong to ask what he was worried about next.

Roubini, who is 50, has a tousled look, from his curly black hair to his rumpled clothing. The initial impression he gave was of total physical exhaustion. When he spoke, at mid-afternoon in Hong Kong, he would scrunch his eyes closed tight, as if forcing himself awake, and shove his suit jacket sleeves and shirt sleeves high up from his wrists to his forearms in the same effort.

You often see this paralyzing fatigue in people who've recently made the flight to Asia. What was unusual in

Roubini's case is that even with eyes closed he kept emitting high-speed and complex answers, which proved on transcription to consist of well-formed sentences and logical sequences. They were delivered in an accent that is what you might imagine from someone who spent his first 20-plus years in Turkey, Iran, Israel, and Italy before going to the United States as a graduate student at Harvard. In a few cases, I later realized, the polish of his responses was because he was reciting passages from papers he had written, as if from an invisible teleprompter. But mostly he seemed to be drawing on data points and implications that were so much on his mind they could be processed and expressed even when the rest of him was spent.

The conversation was surprising in three ways: for the relatively high grades Roubini gave Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, generally the least-praised member of the Obama economic team; for the overall support (with one significant exception) he expressed for the administration's response to the economic crisis; and for his willingness to look far enough beyond today's disaster to speculate about the problems a recovery might bring. He was also full of advice about China's reaction to the world financial crisis, including the suggestion that its options are narrower than its leaders may grasp.

ROUBINI'S COMPLIMENTS for Geithner were in the context of the intellectual and policy history of how the crash had developed and why its effects have been so severe. The dot-com and larger tech-industry crash of 2000 eliminated a tremendous amount of stock-market wealth. During the panicky sell-off of 1987, nearly a quarter of the New York Stock Exchange's total value was lost in one day. By comparison, defaults on subprime mortgages would seem more limited in their capacity to harm the economy. Why, then, had so much gone so deeply wrong?

Roubini said that the difference was partly "debt versus equity." That is, a loss of stock-market value is damaging, but defaults on loans, which put banks themselves in trouble, had a "multiplier" effect: "When there's a credit crunch, for every dollar of capital the financial institution loses, the contraction of credit has to be 10 times bigger." This was the process at work last fall, when banks that were concerned about their own survival cut off working capital to everyone else.

The more important difference between this crash and others, Roubini said, was that the speculative bubble involved so much more of the economy than the term "subprime" could suggest. "It was subprime, it was near-prime, it was prime mortgages," he said, warming up to rattle off a long list. "It was home-equity-loan lines. It was commercial real estate, it was credit cards, it was auto loans." The list was just getting started, and he used it to emphasize that almost every form of borrowing had been taken beyond reasonable limits, and that most forms of asset had been bid unreasonably high. And not just in the United States: "People talk about the American subprime problem, but there were housing bubbles in the U.K., in Spain, in Ireland, in Iceland, in a large part of emerging Europe, like the Baltics all the way to Hungary and the Balkans," and most parts of the world. "That's why the transmission and the effects have been so severe. It was not just

the U.S., and not just 'subprime.' It was excesses that led to the risk of a tipping point in many different economies."

Roubini's case against Ben Bernanke and his predecessor Alan Greenspan is that they kept interest rates too low for too long—and downplayed the significance of the bubble they helped create. "They kept on arguing that this was a minor housing slump, and this housing slump was going to bottom out," he said. "They kept repeating this mantra that the subprime problem was a 'niche' and 'contained' problem." These were serious analytic errors, he said, of a sort that is common near the end of a bubble. "Bernanke should have known better, but it's not really about him. It's in everybody's interest to let the bubble go on. Instead of the wisdom of the crowd, we got the madness of the crowd."

"So when the proverbial stuff hit the fan in the summer of 2007, [the Fed and the Bush administration] were initially taken by surprise," he concluded. "Their analysis had been wrong. And they didn't understand the severity of what was to come. And all along, their policy was two steps behind the curve." He was much more respectful of the judgment that Timothy Geithner showed.

"You know, when Geithner became president of the New York Fed [late in 2003], the first eight speeches he gave were about systemic risk," he said. (Most were about the way the growing complexity and interconnectedness of financial systems made it harder to know the real degree of risk the entire financial network was exposed to, and how far regulation was lagging behind the quickly changing realities. Most read well in retrospect.) Behind this difference in tone, according to Roubini, was a deeper contrast in belief about what the government could or should do when it saw a financial bubble beginning to form.

About the response once a bubble collapses, most economists are in agreement. Central banks around the world have been lowering interest rates to near zero and pumping new money into their economies. But could they have done anything to forestall the need to? According to Roubini:

"Bernanke, like Greenspan, had this wrong attitude toward asset bubbles. The official philosophy of the Fed was: on the way up with a bubble, you do nothing. You don't try to prick it or contain it. Their argument was, How do I really know it's a bubble? And even if I tried to 'prick' a bubble delicately, it would be like performing neurosurgery with a sledgehammer."

The damage done in these boom-and-bust cycles, Roubini says, is greater than politicians and the media usually acknowledge. Stock-market averages eventually recover, as all buy-and-hold investors now keep telling themselves. (Except in Japan, where the main stock index stood near 39,000 in the late 1980s and is around 9,000 today.) But that doesn't take into account the damage done to the real economy by the swings up and down. "These asset bubbles are increasingly frequent, increasingly dangerous, increasingly virulent, and increasingly costly," he said. After the housing bubble of the 1980s came the S&L crisis and the recession of 1991. After the tech bubble of the 1990s came the recession of 2001. "Most

likely \$10 trillion in household wealth [not just housing value but investments and other assets] has been destroyed in this latest crash. Millions of people have lost their jobs. We will probably add \$7 trillion to our public debt. Eventually that debt must be serviced, and that may hamper growth."

Was there any alternative? Yes, if central bankers had taken a "more symmetric approach" to bubbles, trying to control them as they emerged and not just coping with the consequences after they burst. Geithner, he says, was one of those who saw the danger: "While Ben Bernanke was talking about a 'global savings glut' as the source of imbalances, Geithner was talking about America's excesses and deficits. Like the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlements, he was warning at the New York Fed that we had to be more nuanced in the approach of how you deal with asset bubbles."

THE DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT proper bubble management are of more than historical interest, Roubini argues, because he sees the beginnings of another bubble already in view. He was more supportive on the whole than I would have expected about the Obama administration's financial plans. "I have to give them credit that, less than a month after they came to power, they had achieved three major policy successes," he said. These were passing the \$800 billion stimulus plan, the mortgage-relief plan to reduce foreclosures, and the "toxic asset" plan to help banks clear bad loans from their books. He said that the initial version of the bank-rescue plan

was "botched, because it was rushed," but that the later version was better. "On each of these things, you can criticize specific elements," he said. "But they did the big things, and those are the main parameters of what is a constructive policy response. For now, you have to deal with the problem you are facing. All in all I think the policy is going in the right direction."

But someday, the emergency will be over. Then the side effects of today's deficits-bet damned efforts to spend money and loosen credit will become "the problem you are facing." Roubini has been tart about the things public officials should have known and the

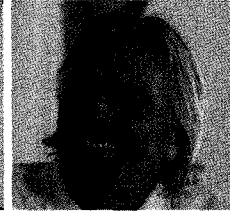
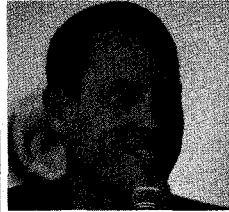
dangers they should have foreseen three or four years ago. What, I asked him, are the decisions of 2009 that we will be regretting in 2012?

For the only time in our conversation, he sat without responding for a measurable interval. "The regrets could be many," he began. *Uh-oh*, I thought. "Even the best policies sometimes have unintended consequences." He then itemized three.

The first involved banks. Like Paul Krugman and others, Roubini had been warning that many banks were weaker than they seemed. Rather than trying to nurse them along, he said, the government should move straightaway to nationalization: "I'm concerned that we're not going to deal with the bank problem as we should," he said. "Some banks are insolvent. To prevent them becoming zombie banks, the government should take the problem by the horns and, on

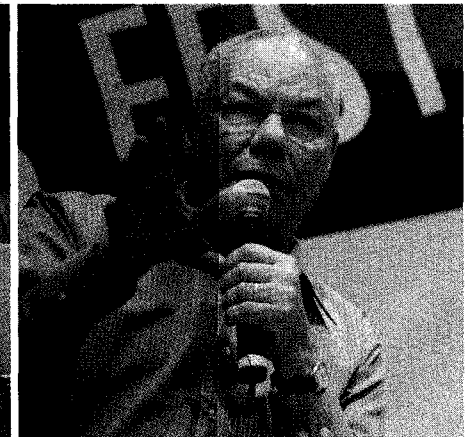
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a temporary basis, nationalize them. Take over these banks, clean them up, and then sell them back to the private sector. Not doing that is one mistake we may make and regret."

Next, "monetizing the debt." This sounds similar to the complaint that the government is spending too much now and will regret it later on, which was the main Republican argument against the stimulus plans. Roubini's concern is different, and mainly involves the delicate process of turning off the extraordinary stimulus measures now being turned on full force.

"The Fed is now embarked on a policy in which they are in effect directly monetizing about half of the budget deficit," he said. The public debt is going up, and the federal government is covering about half of that total by printing new money and sending it to banks. "In the short run," he said, "that monetization is not inflationary." Banks are holding much of the money themselves; "they're not relending it, so that money is not going anywhere and becoming inflationary."

But at some point—Roubini's guess is 2011—the recession will end. Banks will want to lend the money; people and businesses will want to borrow and spend it. Then it will be time for what Roubini calls "the exit strategy, of mopping up that liquidity"—pulling some of the money back out of circulation, so it doesn't just bid up house prices and stock values in a new bubble. And that will be "very, very tricky indeed."

He mentioned cautionary recent examples. The last time the Fed tried to manage this "mopping up" process was after the recovery from the 2001 recession. To minimize the economic impact of the 9/11 attacks, following immediately on the dot-com crash, Alan Greenspan quickly lowered the benchmark interest rate from 3.5 percent, reaching 1 percent in 2003. By 2004 a full recovery was under way, and Greenspan began raising rates at what he called a "measured pace"—25 basis points, or one-fourth of 1 percent, every six weeks. "That implied it would take two and a half years until they normalized the rate," Roubini said. "And that was one of the important sources of trouble, because at that point money was too cheap for a long time, and it really fed the bubble in the housing base." So the lesson would be, when a recovery begins, get rates back to normal, faster.

"But *that* is very tricky," he continued, "because if you do it too fast, when the economy is not recovered in a robust way, you might end up like Japan and slump back into a recession. But, of course, if you do it too slowly, then you risk creating either inflation or another asset bubble." The great difficulty of making these fine distinctions is part of the "brain surgery with a sledgehammer" argument against attempting to intervene at all.

In Roubini's view, there is no choice but to intervene. "We have to do what's necessary to avoid a real depression," he said. But he added that it is not too soon to lay plans for avoiding the consequences of too much money flowing rather than too little.

Roubini had recently been in China and met officials there. We talked about the bind that the world economic slowdown

had created for China's leadership—not despite but because of its huge trade surpluses and foreign-currency holdings. Many Chinese commentators have blamed American over-borrowing and excess for dragging them into a recession. But even they realize that the very excess of American demand has created a market for Chinese exports. Chinese leaders would love to be less dependent on American customers; they hate having so many of their nation's foreign assets tied up in U.S. dollars and subject to the volatility of American stock exchanges. But for the moment, they're more worried about keeping Chinese exporters in business. To do that, they want to prevent their currency from rising. And for reasons laid out in detail in a previous article ("The \$1.4 Trillion

Question," January/February 2008 *Atlantic*), the mechanics of finance require them to keep buying U.S. dollars and entrusting their savings to the United States. "I don't think even the Chinese authorities have fully internalized the contradictions of their position," Roubini said.

I agree. But I can report that for these past six months, virtually every economic conference I've heard of in China and every special supplement in a Chinese business publication has been devoted to the changes the country would have to make in order to reduce its vulnerabilities.

I asked Roubini whether, similarly, American authorities and the U.S. public appreciated the contradictions in their own position. He answered by returning to the damage caused by boom-and-bust cycles and the need to find a different path.

"We've been growing through a period of time of repeated big bubbles," he said. "We've had a model of 'growth' based on overconsumption and lack of savings. And now that model has broken down, because we borrowed too much. We've had a model of growth in which over the last 15 or 20 years, too much human capital went into finance rather than more-productive activities. It was a growth model where we over-invested in the most unproductive form of capital, meaning housing. And we have also been in a growth model that has been based on bubbles. The only time we are growing fast enough is when there's a big bubble.

"The question is, can the U.S. grow in a non-bubble way?" He asked the question rhetorically, so I turned it back on him. Can it?

"I think we have to ..." He paused. "You know, the potential for our future growth is going to be lower, because of the excesses we've had. Sustainable growth may mean investing slowly in infrastructures for the future, and rebuilding our human capital. Renewable resources. Maybe nanotechnology? We don't know what it's going to be. There are parts of the economy we can expect to lead to a more sustainable and less bubble-like growth. But it's going to be a challenge to find a new growth model. It's not going to be simple." I took this not as pessimism but as realism. ■

James Fallows is an Atlantic national correspondent. His site is jamesfallows.theatlantic.com.



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PANDEMICS. GLOBAL WARMING. *Food shortages. No more fossil fuels. What are humans to do? The same thing the species has done before: evolve to meet the challenge. But this time we don't have to rely on natural evolution to make us smart enough to survive. We can do it ourselves, right now, by harnessing technology and pharmacology to boost our intelligence. Is Google actually making us smarter?*

TECHNOLOGY

GET SMART

By Jamais Cascio

SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND YEARS ago, humanity nearly went extinct. A super-volcano at what's now Lake Toba, in Sumatra, erupted with a strength more than a thousand times that of Mount St. Helens in 1980. Some 800 cubic kilometers of ash filled the skies of the Northern Hemisphere, lowering global temperatures and pushing a climate already on the verge of an ice age over the edge. Some scientists speculate that as the Earth went into a deep freeze, the population of *Homo sapiens* may have dropped to as low as a few thousand families.

The Mount Toba incident, although unprecedented in magnitude, was part of a broad pattern. For a period of 2 million years, ending with the last ice age around 10,000 B.C., the Earth experienced a series of convulsive glacial events. This rapid-fire climate change meant that humans couldn't rely on consistent patterns to know which animals to hunt, which plants to gather, or even which predators might be waiting around the corner.

How did we cope? By getting smarter. The neurophysiologist William Calvin argues persuasively that modern human cognition—including sophisticated language and the capacity to plan ahead—evolved in response to the demands of this long age of turbulence. According to Calvin, the reason we survived is that our brains changed to meet the challenge: we transformed the ability to target a moving animal with a thrown rock into a capability for foresight and long-term planning. In the process, we may have developed syntax and formal structure from our simple language.

Our present century may not be quite as perilous for the human race as an ice age in the aftermath of a super-volcano eruption, but the next few decades will pose enormous hurdles that go beyond the climate crisis. The end of the fossil-fuel era, the fragility of the global food web, growing population density, and the spread of pandemics, as well as the emergence of radically transformative bio- and nanotechnologies—each of these threatens us with broad disruption or even devastation. And as good as our brains have become at planning ahead, we're still biased toward looking for near-term, simple threats. Subtle, long-term risks, particularly those involving complex, global processes, remain devilishly hard for us to manage.

But here's an optimistic scenario for you: if the next several decades are as bad as some of us fear they could be, we can respond, and survive, the way our species has done time and again: by getting smarter. But this time, we don't have to rely solely on natural evolutionary processes to boost our intelligence. We can do it ourselves.

Most people don't realize that this process is already under way. In fact, it's happening all around us, across the full spectrum of how we understand intelligence. It's visible in the hive mind of the Internet, in the powerful tools for simulation and visualization that are jump-starting new scientific disciplines, and in the development of drugs that some people (myself included) have discovered let them study harder, focus better, and stay awake longer with full clarity. So far, these augmentations have largely been outside of our bodies, but they're very much part of who we are

ANASTASIA VASILAKIS



today: they're physically separate from us, but we and they are becoming cognitively inseparable. And advances over the next few decades, driven by breakthroughs in genetic engineering and artificial intelligence, will make today's technologies seem primitive. The nascent jargon of the field describes this as "intelligence augmentation." I prefer to think of it as "You+."

Scientists refer to the 12,000 years or so since the last ice age as the Holocene epoch. It encompasses the rise of human civilization and our co-evolution with tools and technologies that allow us to grapple with our physical environment. But if intelligence augmentation has the kind of impact I expect, we may soon have to start thinking of ourselves as living in an entirely new era. The focus of our technological evolution would be less on how we manage and adapt to our physical world, and more on how we manage and adapt to the immense amount of knowledge we've created. We can call it the Nöocene epoch, from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the Nöosphere, a collective consciousness created by the deepening interaction of human minds. As that epoch draws closer, the world is becoming a very different place.

OF COURSE, WE'VE been augmenting our ability to think for millennia. When we developed written language, we significantly increased our functional memory and our ability to share insights and knowledge across time and space. The same thing happened with the invention of the printing press, the telegraph, and the radio. The rise of urbanization allowed a fraction of the populace to focus on more-cerebral tasks—a fraction that grew inexorably as more-complex economic and social practices demanded more knowledge work, and industrial technology reduced the demand for manual labor. And caffeine and nicotine, of course, are both classic cognitive-enhancement drugs, primitive though they may be.

With every technological step forward, though, has come anxiety about the possibility that technology harms our natural ability to think. These anxieties were given eloquent expression in these pages by Nicholas Carr, whose essay "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (July/August 2008 *Atlantic*) argued that the information-dense, hyperlink-rich, spastically churning Internet medium is effectively rewiring our brains, making it harder for us to engage in deep, relaxed contemplation.

Carr's fears about the impact of wall-to-wall connectivity on the human intellect echo cyber-theorist Linda Stone's description of "continuous partial attention," the modern phenomenon of having multiple activities and connections under way simultaneously. We're becoming so accustomed to interruption that we're starting to find focusing difficult, even when we've achieved a bit of quiet. It's an induced form of ADD—a "continuous partial attention-deficit disorder," if you will.

There's also just more information out there—because unlike with previous information media, with the Internet, creating material is nearly as easy as consuming it. And it's easy to mistake more voices for more noise. In reality, though, the proliferation of diverse voices may actually improve our overall ability to think. In *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, Steven Johnson argues that the increasing complexity and

range of media we engage with have, over the past century, made us smarter, rather than dumber, by providing a form of cognitive calisthenics. Even pulp-television shows and video games have become extraordinarily dense with detail, filled with subtle references to broader subjects, and more open to interactive engagement. They reward the capacity to make connections and to see patterns—precisely the kinds of skills we need for managing an information glut.

Scientists describe these skills as our "fluid intelligence"—the ability to find meaning in confusion and to solve new problems, independent of acquired knowledge. Fluid intelligence doesn't look much like the capacity to memorize and recite facts, the skills that people have traditionally associated with brainpower. But building it up may improve the capacity to think deeply that Carr and others fear we're losing for good. And we shouldn't let the stresses associated with a transition to a new era blind us to that era's astonishing potential. We swim in an ocean of data, accessible from nearly anywhere, generated by billions of devices. We're only beginning to explore what we can do with this knowledge-at-a-touch.

Moreover, the technology-induced ADD that's associated with this new world may be a short-term problem. The trouble isn't that we have too much information at our fingertips, but that our tools for managing it are still in their infancy. Worries about "information overload" predate the rise of the Web (Alvin Toffler coined the phrase in 1970), and many of the technologies that Carr worries about were developed precisely to help us get some control over a flood of data and ideas. Google isn't the problem; it's the beginning of a solution.

In any case, there's no going back. The information sea isn't going to dry up, and relying on cognitive habits evolved and perfected in an era of limited information flow—and limited information access—is futile. Strengthening our fluid intelligence is the only viable approach to navigating the age of constant connectivity.

WHEN PEOPLE HEAR the phrase *intelligence augmentation*, they tend to envision people with computer chips plugged into their brains, or a genetically engineered race of post-human super-geniuses. Neither of these visions is likely to be realized, for reasons familiar to any Best Buy shopper. In a world of ongoing technological acceleration, today's cutting-edge brain implant would be tomorrow's obsolete junk—and good luck if the protocols change or you're on the wrong side of a "format war" (anyone want a Betamax implant?). And then there's the question of stability: Would you want a chip in your head made by the same folks that made your cell phone, or your PC?

Likewise, the safe modification of human genetics is still years away. And even after genetic modification of adult neurobiology becomes possible, the science will remain in flux; our understanding of how augmentation works, and what kinds of genetic modifications are possible, would still change rapidly. As with digital implants, the brain modification you might undergo one week could become obsolete the next. Who would want a 2025-vintage brain when you're competing against hotshots with Model 2026?

Yet in one sense, the age of the cyborg and the super-genius has already arrived. It just involves external information and communication devices instead of implants and genetic modification. The bioethicist James Hughes of Trinity College refers to all of this as “exocortical technology,” but you can just think of it as “stuff you already own.” Increasingly, we buttress our cognitive functions with our computing systems, no matter that the connections are mediated by simple typing and pointing. These tools enable our brains to do things that would once have been almost unimaginable:

- powerful simulations and massive data sets allow physicists to visualize, understand, and debate models of an 11-dimension universe;
- real-time data from satellites, global environmental databases, and high-resolution models allow geophysicists to recognize the subtle signs of long-term changes to the planet;
- cross-connected scheduling systems allow anyone to assemble, with a few clicks, a complex, multimodal travel itinerary that would have taken a human travel agent days to create.

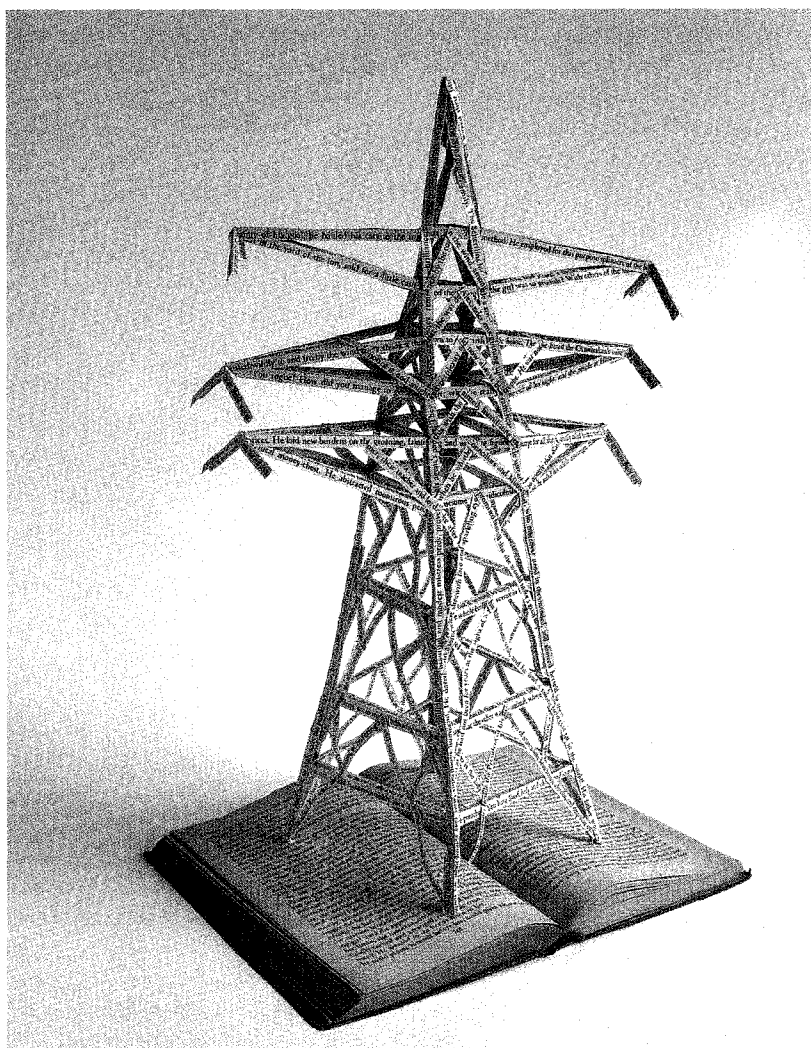
If that last example sounds prosaic, it simply reflects how embedded these kinds of augmentation have become. Not much more than a decade ago, such a tool was outrageously impressive—and it destroyed the travel-agent industry.

That industry won’t be the last one to go. Any occupation requiring pattern-matching and the ability to find obscure connections will quickly morph from the domain of experts to that of ordinary people whose intelligence has been augmented by cheap digital tools. Humans won’t be taken out of the loop—in fact, many, many *more* humans will have the capacity to do something that was once limited to a hermetic priesthood. Intelligence augmentation decreases the need for specialization and increases participatory complexity.

As the digital systems we rely upon become faster, more sophisticated, and (with the usual hiccups) more capable, we’re becoming more sophisticated and capable too. It’s a form of co-evolution: we learn to adapt our thinking and expectations to these digital systems, even as the system designs become more complex and powerful to meet more of our needs—and eventually come to adapt to *us*.

Consider the Twitter phenomenon, which went from nearly invisible to nearly ubiquitous (at least among the online crowd) in early 2007. During busy periods, the user can easily be overwhelmed by the volume of incoming messages, most of which are of only passing interest. But there is a tiny minority of truly valuable posts. (Sometimes they have

GALLERY Power by Stephen Doyle



extreme value, as they did during the October 2007 wildfires in California and the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai.) At present, however, finding the most-useful bits requires wading through messages like “My kitty sneezed!” and “I hate this taco!”

But imagine if social tools like Twitter had a way to learn what kinds of messages you pay attention to, and which ones you discard. Over time, the messages that you don’t really care about might start to fade in the display, while the ones that you do want to see could get brighter. Such attention filters—or focus assistants—are likely to become important parts of how we handle our daily lives. We’ll move from a world of “continuous partial attention” to one we might call “continuous augmented awareness.”

As processor power increases, tools like Twitter may be able to draw on the complex simulations and massive data sets that have unleashed a revolution in science. They could become individualized systems that augment our capacity for planning and foresight, letting us play “what-if” with our life choices: where to live, what to study, maybe even where to go for dinner. Initially crude and clumsy, such a system would get better with more data and more experience; just

as important, we'd get better at asking questions. These systems, perhaps linked to the cameras and microphones in our mobile devices, would eventually be able to pay attention to what we're doing, and to our habits and language quirks, and learn to interpret our sometimes ambiguous desires. With enough time and complexity, they would be able to make useful suggestions without explicit prompting.

And such systems won't be working for us alone. Intelligence has a strong social component; for example, we already provide crude cooperative information-filtering for each other. In time, our interactions through the use of such intimate technologies could dovetail with our use of collaborative knowledge systems (such as Wikipedia), to help us not just to build better data sets, but to filter them with greater precision. As our capacity to provide that filter gets faster and richer, it increasingly becomes something akin to collaborative intuition—in which everyone is effectively augmenting everyone else.

IN PHARMACOLOGY, TOO, the future is already here. One of the most prominent examples is a drug called modafinil. Developed in the 1970s, modafinil—sold in the U.S. under the brand name Provigil—appeared on the cultural radar in the late 1990s, when the American military began to test it for long-haul pilots. Extended use of modafinil can keep a person awake and alert for well over 32 hours on end, with only a full night's sleep required to get back to a normal schedule.

While it is FDA-approved only for a few sleep disorders, like narcolepsy and sleep apnea, doctors increasingly prescribe it to those suffering from depression, to "shift workers" fighting fatigue, and to frequent business travelers dealing with time-zone shifts. I'm part of the latter group: like more and more professionals, I have a prescription for modafinil in order to help me overcome jet lag when I travel internationally. When I started taking the drug, I expected it to keep me awake; I didn't expect it to make me feel smarter, but that's exactly what happened. The change was subtle but clear, once I recognized it: within an hour of taking a standard 200-mg tablet, I was much more alert, and thinking with considerably more clarity and focus than usual. This isn't just a subjective conclusion. A University of Cambridge study, published in 2003, concluded that modafinil confers a measurable cognitive-enhancement effect across a variety of mental tasks, including pattern recognition and spatial planning, and sharpens focus and alertness.

I'm not the only one who has taken advantage of this effect. The Silicon Valley insider webzine *Tech Crunch* reported in July 2008 that some entrepreneurs now see modafinil as an important competitive tool. The tone of the piece was judgmental, but the implication was clear: everybody's doing it, and if you're not, you're probably falling behind.

This is one way a world of intelligence augmentation emerges. Little by little, people who don't know about drugs like modafinil or don't want to use them will face stiffer competition from the people who do. From the perspective of a

culture immersed in athletic doping wars, the use of such drugs may seem like cheating. From the perspective of those who find that they're much more productive using this form of enhancement, it's no more cheating than getting a faster computer or a better education.

Modafinil isn't the only example; on college campuses, the use of ADD drugs (such as Ritalin and Adderall) as study aids has become almost ubiquitous. But these enhancements are primitive. As the science improves, we could see other kinds of cognitive-modification drugs that boost recall, brain plasticity, even empathy and emotional intelligence. They would start as therapeutic treatments, but end up being used

to make us "better than normal." Eventually, some of these may become over-the-counter products at your local pharmacy, or in the juice and snack aisles at the supermarket. Spam e-mail would be full of offers to make your brain bigger, and your idea production more powerful.

Such a future would bear little resemblance to *Brave New World* or similar narcotic nightmares; we may fear the idea of a population kept doped and placated, but we're more likely to see a populace stuck in overdrive, searching out the last bits of competitive advantage, business insight, and radical innovation. No small amount of

that innovation would be directed toward inventing the next, more powerful cognitive-enhancement technology.

This would be a different kind of nightmare, perhaps, and cause waves of moral panic and legislative restriction. Safety would be a huge issue. But as we've found with athletic doping, if there's a technique for beating out rivals (no matter how risky), shutting it down is nearly impossible. This would be yet another pharmacological arms race—and in this case, the competitors on one side would just keep getting smarter.

THE MOST RADICAL form of superhuman intelligence, of course, wouldn't be a mind augmented by drugs or exocortical technology; it would be a mind that isn't human at all. Here we move from the realm of extrapolation to the realm of speculation, since solid predictions about artificial intelligence are notoriously hard: our understanding of how the brain creates the mind remains far from good enough to tell us how to construct a mind in a machine.

But while the concept remains controversial, I see no good argument for why a mind running on a machine platform instead of a biological platform will forever be impossible; whether one might appear in five years or 50 or 500, however, is uncertain. I lean toward 50, myself. That's enough time to develop computing hardware able to run a high-speed neural network as sophisticated as that of a human brain, and enough time for the kids who will have grown up surrounded by virtual-world software and household robots—that is, the people who see this stuff not as "Technology," but as everyday tools—to come to dominate the field.

Many proponents of developing an artificial mind are sure that such a breakthrough will be the biggest change in human history. They believe that a machine mind would soon

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modify itself to get smarter—and with its new intelligence, then figure out how to make itself smarter still. They refer to this intelligence explosion as “the Singularity,” a term applied by the computer scientist and science-fiction author Vernor Vinge. “Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence,” Vinge wrote in 1993. “Shortly after, the human era will be ended.” The Singularity concept is a secular echo of Teilhard de Chardin’s “Omega Point,” the culmination of the Nöosphere at the end of history. Many believers in Singularity—which one wag has dubbed “the Rapture for nerds”—think that building the first real AI will be the last thing humans do. Some imagine this moment with terror, others with a bit of glee.

My own suspicion is that a stand-alone artificial mind will be more a tool of narrow utility than something especially apocalyptic. I don’t think the theory of an explosively self-improving AI is convincing—it’s based on too many assumptions about behavior and the nature of the mind. Moreover, AI researchers, after years of talking about this prospect, are already ultra-conscious of the risk of runaway systems.

More important, though, is that the same advances in processor and process that would produce a machine mind would also increase the power of our own cognitive-enhancement technologies. As intelligence augmentation allows us to make *ourselves* smarter, and then smarter still, AI may turn out to be just a sideshow: we could always be a step ahead.

S O WHAT’S LIFE like in a world of brain doping, intuition networks, and the occasional artificial mind?

Banal.

Not from our present perspective, of course. For us, now, looking a generation ahead might seem surreal and dizzying. But remember: people living in, say, 2030 will have lived every moment from now until then—we won’t jump into the future. For someone going from 2009 to 2030 day by day, most of these changes wouldn’t be jarring; instead, they’d be incremental, almost overdetermined, and the occasional surprises would quickly blend into the flow of inevitability.

By 2030, then, we’ll likely have grown accustomed to (and perhaps even complacent about) a world where sophisticated foresight, detailed analysis and insight, and augmented awareness are commonplace. We’ll have developed a better capacity to manage both partial attention and laser-like focus, and be able to slip between the two with ease—perhaps by popping the right pill, or eating the right snack. Sometimes, our augmentation assistants will handle basic interactions on our behalf; that’s okay, though, because we’ll increasingly see those assistants as extensions of ourselves.

The amount of data we’ll have at our fingertips will be staggering, but we’ll finally have gotten over the notion that accumulated information alone is a hallmark of intelligence. The power of all of this knowledge will come from its ability to inform difficult decisions, and to support complex analysis. Most professions will likely use simulation and modeling in their day-to-day work, from political decisions to hairstyle options. In a world of augmented intelligence, we will have a far greater appreciation of the consequences of our actions.

This doesn’t mean we’ll all come to the same conclusions. We’ll still clash with each other’s emotions, desires, and beliefs. If anything, our arguments will be more intense, buttressed not just by strongly held opinions but by intricate reasoning. People in 2030 will look back aghast at how ridiculously unsubtle the political and cultural disputes of our present were, just as we might today snicker at simplistic advertising from a generation ago.

Conversely, the debates of the 2030s would be remarkable for us to behold. Nuance and multiple layers will characterize even casual disputes; our digital assistants will be there to catch any references we might miss. And all of this will be everyday, banal reality. Today, it sounds mind-boggling; by then, it won’t even merit comment.

What happens if such a complex system collapses? Disaster, of course. But don’t forget that we already depend upon enormously complex systems that we no longer even think of as technological. Urbanization, agriculture, and trade were at one time huge innovations. Their collapse (and all of them are now at risk, in different ways, as we have seen in recent months) would be an even greater catastrophe than the collapse of our growing webs of interconnected intelligence.

A less apocalyptic but more likely danger derives from the observation made by the science-fiction author William Gibson: “The future is already here, it’s just unevenly distributed.” The rich, whether nations or individuals, will inevitably gain access to many augmentations before anyone else. We know from history, though, that a world of limited access wouldn’t last forever, even as the technology improved: those who sought to impose limits would eventually face angry opponents with newer, better systems.

Even as competition provides access to these kinds of technologies, though, development paths won’t be identical. Some societies may be especially welcoming to biotech boosts; others may prefer to use digital tools. Some may readily adopt collaborative approaches; others may focus on individual enhancement. And around the world, many societies will reject the use of intelligence-enhancement technology entirely, or adopt a cautious wait-and-see posture.

The bad news is that these divergent paths may exacerbate cultural divides created by already divergent languages and beliefs. National rivalries often emphasize cultural differences, but for now we’re all still standard human beings. What happens when different groups quite literally think in very, very different ways?

The good news, though, is that this diversity of thought can also be a strength. Coping with the various world-historical dangers we face will require the greatest possible insight, creativity, and innovation. Our ability to build the future that we want—not just a future we can survive—depends on our capacity to understand the complex relationships of the world’s systems, to take advantage of the diversity of knowledge and experience our civilization embodies, and to fully appreciate the implications of our choices. Such an ability is increasingly within our grasp. The Nöocene awaits. ■

Jamais Cascio is an affiliate at the Institute for the Future and a senior fellow at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies.

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RIDING MOTORBIKES WITHOUT A HELMET, *flying planes while half asleep—not to mention discussing books he'd never read and using words he didn't understand*—William F. Buckley courted adventure in all that he did. Here, the conservative godfather's onetime protégé and longtime nemesis fondly recalls their friendship—and argues that Buckley was not the snob many thought him to be.

PROFILE

DAREDEVIL

By Garry Wills

HOUR BY HOUR, day by day, Bill Buckley was just an exciting person to be around, especially when he was exhilarated by his love of sailing. He could turn any event into an adventure, a joke, a showdown. He loved risk. I saw him time after time rush his boat toward a harbor, sails flying, only to swerve and drop sail at the last moment. For some on the pier, looking up to see this large yacht bearing down on them, it was a heart-stopping moment. To add to the excitement, Bill was often standing on the helmsman's seat, his hands clutching the shrouds above his head, turning the wheel with his foot, in a swashbuckling pose. (He claimed he saw the berth better from up there.)

I once saw the importance of his swift reflexes on the boat. We had set out for a night sail on the ocean, and Bill's Yale friend Van Galbraith—later President Reagan's ambassador to France—had got tipsy from repeated shots of Tia Maria in his coffee. He fell overboard while the boat was under full

sail. In a flash, Bill threw overboard a life preserver with a bright light on it, and called for us to bring the boat about. We circled back toward Galbraith, found him in the darkness, and fished him out. It was a scary moment, one that only Bill's cool rapidity kept from being a tragic one.

Bill wrote the way he sailed, taking chances. Once, he called me up to ask about some new papal pronouncement. He had got into trouble with fellow Catholics by criticizing papal encyclicals, and I had become a kind of informal adviser on Catholic matters. The statement at issue that day was obscure.

He wanted to launch an immediate attack on it. I asked why he did not wait to see what impact it would have. "Why not wait? Because I don't have *falsos testes*." He was referring to an earlier discussion, in which he asked whether even papal defenders admit the pontiff can err. I said that medieval commentators claimed that such an error could happen if the pope was given imperfect evidence (*propter falsos testes*). He asked, "Isn't *testis* [testifier] the same word in Latin as *testicle*?" Yes. That was all the warrant he needed.



He was always ready to plunge in. Another time he called me and asked, "Have you ever heard of Joe Nuh-math?" This was when everybody had heard of the way Joe *Nay*-math won the 1969 Super Bowl as quarterback for the New York Jets. Bill had only just read the name in an editor's letter asking him to write about the man. I told him how Namath had beat my hero, Johnny Unitas, in the Super Bowl. There were large gaps in Bill's knowledge of popular culture, especially of popular sports. His father once wrote to Bill's future father-in-law, complaining that he had tried for years, without success, to interest his son in the ordinary games—golf or tennis or team sports. But Bill had a relish only for solo performances—sailing, skiing, horseback riding, or flying an airplane. I asked if Bill was going to write about Namath. Yes. "That should be an interesting interview." He said, "Oh, I don't have time to learn enough about football to interview him." He wrote the piece by comparing Namath's career to something he did know—the record of a famous bullfighter.

Another time, I was on Bill's boat racing to Bermuda. We saw on the horizon a huge shape like an island—it was

a World War II battleship taken out of mothballs and put out for a shakedown cruise before being sent to the Vietnam War, a breathtaking sight from our lower vantage point on the water. Bill could not resist hailing it on the radio, though radioing was against racing rules except in an emergency. When we reached Bermuda, Bill was disqualified. One of the other boats had heard his conversation with the battleship and reported him. He said it was worth it. He reminded me of one of Wodehouse's blithe young men—Psmith, say, or Piccadilly Jim—who act forever on impulse.

He took risks even in routine and mundane ways. One night, after dinner at his town house in Manhattan, he wanted to continue our conversation, so instead of calling me a cab to take me back to my hotel he gave me a ride on his motorbike. New York law required that bikers wear a helmet, so a policeman stopped us—neither of us was helmeted. When the cop recognized him, he let us go with just a warning, since Bill was popular with cops for opposing police review boards. Needless to say, the next time he gave me a ride, there were still no helmets.

STEVE SCHAPIRO/CORBIS

It is amazing that Bill's risks did not end his life. At Yale he secretly learned to fly, and bought a small plane with a couple of friends, without letting his father know about it. He landed the plane on his sister's prep-school campus in a spectacular visit. On the day of his college tests, he took the plane out for a celebratory flight, all by himself. He had been up the night before cramming for the exams, and he fell asleep. Fortunately, he woke in time to land the plane. A great career might have ended before it began.

For a while I was Bill's designated biographer. A shared friend of ours, Neil McCaffrey, commissioned the book for his new publishing venture, Arlington House. Bill approved the idea because, like many celebrities, he was constantly pestered by people wanting to interview him for books or magazines. With me as his chosen scribe, he could turn them down by saying he was already committed. I recorded many hours of tapes with him, his wife, his siblings, and his friends for the project, before giving it up over political disagreements. He was stunningly candid, so much so that I, like many people close to him, came to feel I should protect him from his own reckless truthfulness. He was too trusting of people he liked. He set up a former boat boy in a partnership to buy radio stations, and afterward found that his young partner had bilked him. He argued for the innocence of a prisoner who wrote him winning letters, and worked to have Edgar Smith released, only to see the man convicted again, this time of kidnapping and attempted murder.

Some of the things Bill told me on the tapes I have never repeated, except to my wife. One thing I can partly tell now that he is dead. When he entered the CIA, in 1951, he beat the polygraph test that all prospective agents have to take. (Always willing to risk.) He was determined to protect a family member from an embarrassing disclosure, and he did. I asked him how he accomplished that. "I guess that if you think you have a right to tell a lie, it will not register as one." At least it did not with him. He told me what he lied about, though I promised then to keep the secret, and I have.

FROM WHAT I have said so far, it might be thought that Bill was self-centered. That was far from the case. He was thoughtful of others, almost to a fault. When he found that a summer intern at *National Review* was a promising young pianist who missed his practice hours back in the Midwest, he gave him the key to his town house (which had been UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's) and told him he could use it, while his wife was away, to play on his splendid Bösendorfer piano.

His generosity was unfailing. He liked to do things for people, surprising them with unexpected gifts. When the writer Wilfrid Sheed was ill, Bill, who knew he was a deep student of popular song, sent him the latest books on the subject. One day in the early '60s, a large package was brought to my front door. It was the 24 volumes of the new edition

of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Another time I got a package containing framed copies of two charcoal portraits by the famous British newspaper artist David Low. These were studies of G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, men Bill knew I admired. I asked where he had got the pictures. They were a gift to him from the British broadcaster Alistair Cooke. Bill said, "They will mean more to you than to me."

He spent a lot of time thinking of what he could do for friends. When he heard that I needed a passport in a hurry, he pulled strings at the State Department to get it for me. On another occasion, when my new bride and I could not find a cheap sea liner to England for our honeymoon, he found a ship for us leaving from Canada. Bill ingeniously invented a way to institutionalize his love for giving special gifts. Because his family was so prolific, he had 49 of what he called "N and Ns" (nieces and nephews). He took care of the education of many of them. But supplying necessities was not enough for him. He set up a fund he called the Dear Uncle Bill Trust (DUBT, soon pronounced "Doubt"), whose administrators gave surprise treats to N and Ns—a valuable guitar to an aspiring musician, a vacation in a favorite spot—on a rotating basis.

His desire to do things for people made him an inveterate matchmaker. He did all he could to encourage his Yale friend Brent Bozell to marry his favorite sister, Patricia (Trish), which Bozell did in 1949. He hinted that another Yale undergraduate, Bill Coffin, should date another of his sisters. When I went to *National Review* in the summer of 1957, I was just two months out of a Jesuit seminary, where I had been starved for opera music, and I soon found the Sam Goody music store. But the apartment I was staying in had no phonograph. When I mentioned this to Bill's younger sister Maureen, who was working part-time at *National Review* that summer, she gave me the key to her apartment and said I could use the phonograph there any afternoon while she was working. Bill noticed that Maureen and I got along well, and when we would all go out to dinner at the end of the day, he'd put us together in one cab and take another with the rest of the party. We laughed at his matchmaking attempts. It was a family trait. Trish had met Pat Taylor at Vassar and decided Bill should marry her—as he did.

Perhaps it was his matchmaking urge that made Bill want to connect people with his church. After he learned as a child that any Christian can baptize a person in need of salvation, he and Trish would unobtrusively rub water on visitors to their home while whispering the baptism formula. In the *National Review* circle, those who were not Catholics to begin with tended to enter the fold as converts—Bozell, Russell Kirk, Willmoore Kendall, Frank Meyer, William Rusher, Jeffrey Hart, M. Joseph Sobran, Marvin Liebman, Robert Novak, Richard John Neuhaus. The major holdouts were James Burnham, a born Catholic who left the faith and never went back, and Whittaker Chambers, who was drawn to Richard Nixon's Quakerism. It was always easiest to be a Catholic around Bill. I believe Bill was so nice to me because I am

Some of the things he told me I have never repeated. One thing I can partly tell now that he is dead. When he entered the CIA, in 1951, he beat a polygraph test.

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what the Lutheran scholar Martin Marty called me, “incurably Catholic.” There were different concentrations of people at *National Review*—Yale alumni, ex-communists (Burnham, Meyer, Chambers), ex-CIA members (Bill, Burnham, Kendall, and Priscilla Buckley, another of Bill’s sisters)—but the Catholic contingent outnumbered all others.

Bill went to church on Sundays with the many Spanish-speaking house servants he had over the years. That did not fit his reputation as a snob. He was accused, at times, of being a social snob, an ideological snob, and an intellectual snob. None of these was the case in any but the most superficial sense.

SOCIAL SNOB?

Bill could hardly have been a social snob when he was playing matchmaker for his sister and me. I was a penniless nobody. For that matter, Brent Bozell had no significant money or social standing when (with Bill’s encouragement) he married Trish Buckley. Brent had got to Yale on a double scholarship, from the GI Bill and from an American Legion oratory award. Where his family was concerned, Bill always cared more about a person’s being Catholic and conservative than about his or her being rich. I passed the Catholic test, and came close enough on the conservative point in 1957, for him to hint that Maureen and I might be made for each other.

Despite his religious and ideological preferences, Bill was basically egalitarian.

Though he always used proper titles for guests on his TV show, he was “Bill” to everyone from the moment they met him. He treated all ranks at the magazine with equal courtesy and respect. There was never any “side” to him. In this he was unlike his wife. He always dressed like a rumpled undergraduate, while she had Bill Blass and other designers dancing attendance on her. Bill and Pat were deeply in love—each called the other “Ducky,” just as Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn call each other “Pinky” in the movie *Adam’s Rib*. But the Tracy and Hepburn characters have their differences, and so did the Buckleys. They had different (though overlapping) social circles. Bill was amused by some of her friends (like Truman Capote). But she treated some of his intellectual friends—like the literary critic Hugh Kenner—as a nuisance. Pat never finished college, and intellectual talk could make her uneasy. Once, when we were doing a night sail from Stamford, Connecticut (she never went on longer sails), I brought up the writer Donald Barthelme and she said she had no time for such pretentious stuff.

In one of his published journals, Bill described in loving detail the limousine he’d had specially redesigned as a kind of traveling office. He was widely mocked for this. But he had realized the advantage of having a chauffeur only when he ran for mayor of New York, in 1965, and needed a car and driver to get him to events where there was no time or place for parking a car himself. He saw that he could do his endless dictating of letters and columns on the move, and he kept the Irish Catholic driver who had seen him through the campaign. Before that race, he’d regularly ridden around New York on his motorbike. And he was driving his own (modest) car when I met him in 1957. After I arrived at his office in New York to talk about writing for *National Review*, he asked

where I had left my suitcase. I said, “At the airport”; I thought I might be heading right back to Michigan at the end of that day. He told me to wait while he finished his editing for the day, then he drove me to LaGuardia. After I picked up my bag, he drove us out to his home in Stamford, where we talked, swam, and ate dinner. Then he drove me back into New York, put me up in his father’s apartment at 80 Park Avenue, and turned around to drive back to Stamford. He was my chauffeur that day. It was the kind of thoughtfulness many people experienced from him.

IDEOLOGICAL SNOB?

There was a better case for thinking Bill had ideological class prejudices. But when he established *National Review*, in 1955, he applied no ideological test to all those he hired or tried to hire. He wanted good writing and intellectual stimulation. That is why he printed non-right-wingers like John Leonard, Joan Didion, Renata Adler, and Arlene Croce. Later, he sailed or skied with John Kenneth Galbraith and Walter Cronkite (I sailed with both), not because they were celebrities but because he liked them and admired their minds.

The real measure of Bill was the extent to which he overcame the prejudices he began with because of his family. His mother was a southern belle from New Orleans whose grandfather had been a Confederate soldier at Shiloh. She kept the attitude toward blacks of her upbringing. One time, when we were sailing and stopped at Charleston, South Carolina, Bill took me to his father’s winter home. When we arrived, we were greeted by a black retainer who had known Bill from his childhood—he called him “Master Billy.” It was not surprising that Bill and I would initially disagree about the civil-rights movement. In a notorious 1957 editorial called “Why the South Must Prevail,” he defended segregation because whites were “the advanced race,” and “the claims of civilization supersede[d] those of universal suffrage.” We argued over this, and his biographer, John Judis, says that my views gradually had some effect:

Under the influence of conservative proponents of civil rights like Wills and the heated debate about civil rights taking place in the country, Buckley began to distinguish *National Review*’s and the conservative position from that of southern racists.

Another burden from Bill’s early days was his father’s anti-Semitism, a harder thing for him to conquer since he honored his father so profoundly. A close friend of Bill’s at the *Yale Daily News* was Tom Guinzburg, later the president of Viking Press. Guinzburg and Bill’s sister Jane were on the verge of being engaged, and Bill’s father said that Bill, using his friendship with Guinzburg, should prevent a Jew from joining the family. Bill intervened, to his later regret. For once, he was a match breaker rather than a matchmaker. I was with him the night he finally confessed to Jane what he had done behind her back. She said it did not matter—the marriage would not have worked out. Bill said, “I wish I had known that before—I have been reproaching myself all these years.” Bill did more than break *National Review* away from right-wing journals that harbored anti-Semites. When he found that a book reviewer (Revilo Oliver) and one of his editors (M. Joseph Sobran) were writing anti-Semitic stuff

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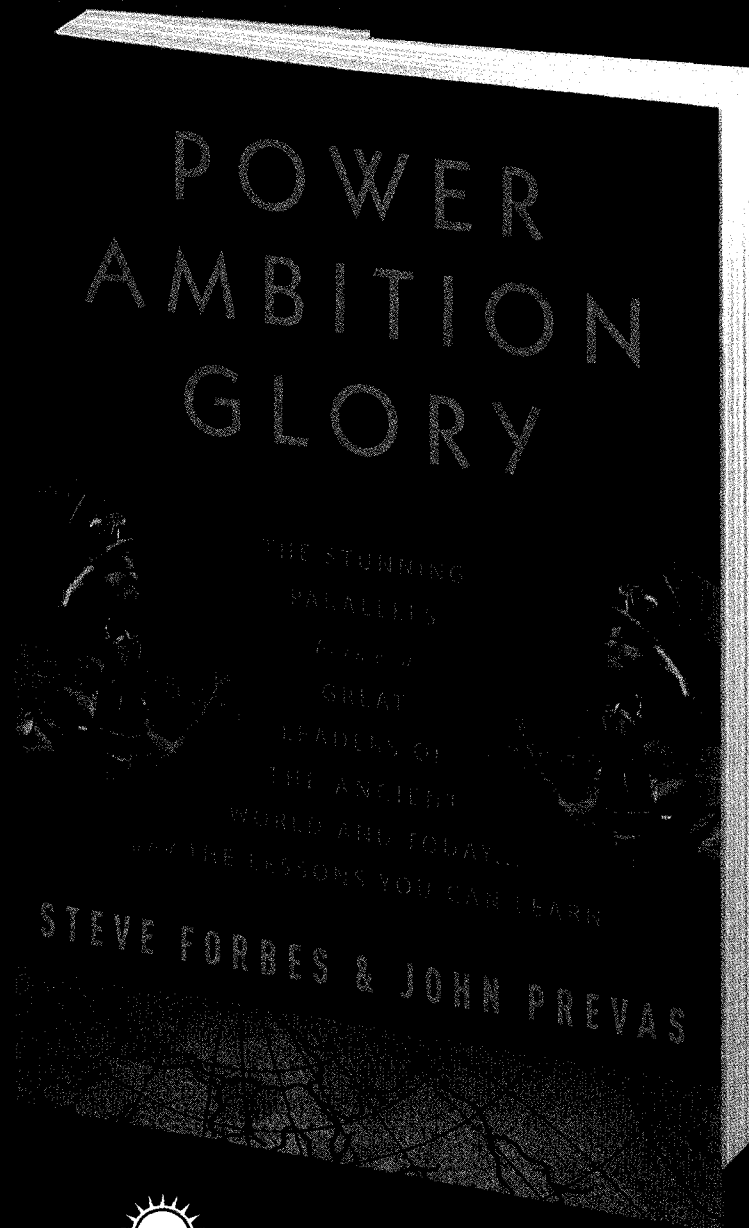
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in other venues, he dismissed them from the magazine. Bill became so sensitive to the problem that he wrote a book on the anti-Semitic writings of right-wingers like Sobran and Patrick Buchanan.

By the time of his death, even Bill's earlier critics admitted that he had done much to make conservatism respectable by purging it of racist and fanatical traits earlier embedded in it. He distanced his followers from the southern prejudices of George Wallace, the anti-Semitism of the Liberty Lobby, the fanaticism of the John Birch Society, the glorification of selfishness by Ayn Rand (famously excoriated in *National Review* by Whittaker Chambers), the paranoia and conspiratorialism of the neocons. In each of these cases, some right-wingers tried to cut off donations to *National Review*, but Bill stood his ground. In doing so, he elevated the discourse of American politics, making civil debate possible between responsible liberals and conservatives.

INTELLECTUAL SNOB?

Bill was considered an elitist because he loved to use big words. But he did it not from hauteur but from impishness. This was part of his playfulness. He liked to play games in general, and word games were especially appealing to him. He used the big words for their own sake, even when he was not secure in their meaning. One of his most famous usages poisoned the general currency, especially among young conservatives trying to imitate him. They took *oxymoron* in the sense he gave it, though that was the opposite of its true meaning. He thought it was a fancier word for "contradiction," so young imitators would say that "an intelligent liberal" was an oxymoron. But the Greek word means "something that is surprisingly true, a paradox," as in a *shrewd dumbness*.

One time Bill's love of exotic locutions came out when he asked me for the meaning of a word I had written, *subumbrous*. I said it meant "cloaked in darkness." He protested that he could not find the word in any of his dictionaries. No wonder, I said, I made it up from the Latin *sub umbra*. He loved that—it continued the word games. But his lunge toward risky words was like his other ventures into risk. He could write, for instance, that *National Review's* "mendacity" prevented the magazine from running free advertisements, when he meant "mendicancy."

Bill was not, and did not pretend to be, a real intellectual. He gave up on the "big book" that his father and others were urging him to write. For years he tried to do a continuation of José Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses*. This had been a sacred text for his father's guru, Albert Jay Nock. Bill took intellectual comrades like Hugh Kenner with him for his winter break in Switzerland, to help him get a grip on this ambitious project. But he told me he realized in time this was not his métier. He was not a reflective thinker. He was a quick responder. He wrote rapidly because he was quickly bored. His gifts were facility, flash, and charm, not depth or prolonged wrestling with a problem.

Bill needed people around him all the time. Frequently, when he told me he had to write a column, I would offer to withdraw from the boat cabin or hotel room where we were. He urged me not to, and as he typed (with great speed and accuracy) he would keep talking off and on, reading a sentence to me, trying out a word, saying that something he was writing would annoy old So-and-So. When I appeared on his TV show to discuss a new book of mine, it was clear to me that he had not read the book—he was given notes on each author he interviewed. Once he asked me if I had read all of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. I said yes. "Haven't you?" He had not. I suspect that was true of the other capitalist classics he referred to, by Ludwig von Mises, Wilhelm Roepke, and others. He could defend them with great panache. But he did not want to sit all by himself for a long time reading them. One of his teachers at Yale, the philosopher Paul Weiss, told me that Bill was very good at discussing books he had not read.

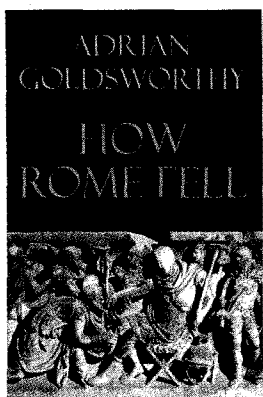
Bill was heatedly attacked by Catholic liberals when he dismissed papal criticism of capitalism. He dismissed John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* for its challenge to the free market. I joked that his attitude was "*Mater sí, Magistra no*," playing on a slogan of the time, "*Cuba sí, Castro no*." He printed the quip in the magazine and was attacked on the assumption that the saying was his own. He questioned me about church teachings. He felt insecure because his Catholic education was so exiguous—it amounted to one year at a Jesuit prep school in England. I had been entirely educated in Catholic schools before entering graduate school at Yale, and he exaggerated what knowledge that had given me.

He wanted to know more about encyclicals. I told him I did not know much. I had read carefully the so-called social encyclicals—*Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931)—because Chesterton had admired their praise of medieval guilds. Bill asked if I would bone up on the subject, and

I agreed to. After I had done some research on the matter, he drove up from Stamford to New Haven to spend an afternoon discussing it. He had been challenged to a debate with an editor of *Commonweal*, William Clancy. Bill suggested that each side be defended by a two-man team—Bill and I on one side, Clancy and a partner of his choosing on the other. Clancy did not like the idea. Nonetheless, when it came time for the debate, to be held across the river from Manhattan in New Jersey, Bill asked me to go along with him for some last-minute preparation in the car. We had to grab a quick dinner before the event, so we stopped at a greasy spoon in New Jersey. When Bill asked for a bottle of red wine, it came out ice-cold, so he asked that it be run under hot water for a while, and we kept up our informal seminar on encyclicals.

Bill handled the debate with his customary forensic stylishness. But the Catholic attacks on him continued. By the early 1960s, they had become so voluminous that our friend Neil McCaffrey made a collection of them, to be published with his sulphurous comments on each item. Bill asked me to write an introduction to the collection, on the status of

**For more years
than I wish,
Bill and I were
estranged.
He once
circulated my
column to his
board with the
notation, "I think
we should smash
him."**

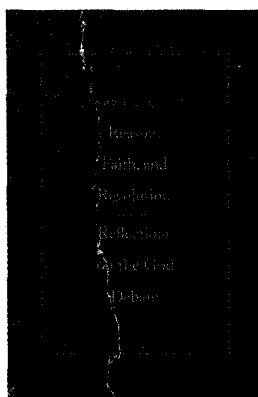


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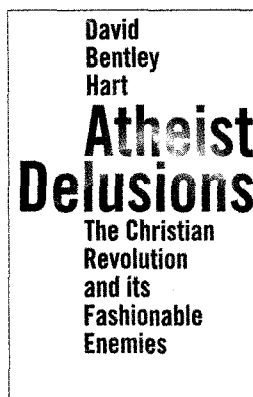
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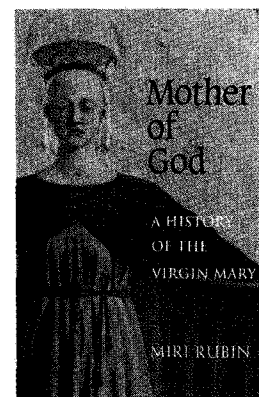
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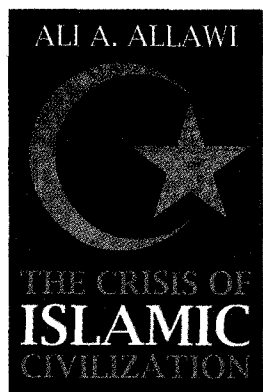
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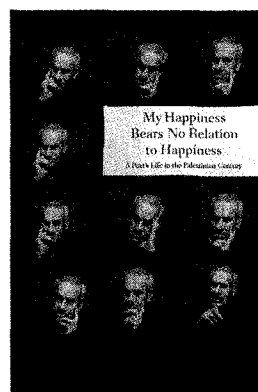
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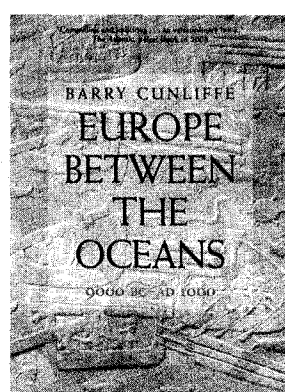
My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness
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Adina Hoffman

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Atlantic, Editor's Choice

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Gone with the Wind Revisited
Molly Haskell

"[Haskell] disentangles the film's qualities from the confounding issues of misogyny, racism and intellectual snobbery...[and] clarifies the long shadow that Scarlett O'Hara casts over the American movie imagination."

—Armond White,
New York Times Book Review

"[Haskell's] juicy scholarship... leaves you yearning to return to Tara, again."

—Susan Wloszczyna, *USA Today*

"A fiercely smart appreciation of *Gone with the Wind*."

—*Entertainment Weekly* 'A'

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encyclicals. When Neil had the book ready, Bill asked me to come out to his garage study at Stamford. He found Neil's intemperate running commentary embarrassing. He wanted to cancel the project—unless I was willing to expand my introduction, incorporating some of the acidulous commentary into a calmer treatment of the matter. I said that I doubted Neil would be amenable to having his concept taken away from him. Bill said I should just leave that to him. Somehow, with his smooth persuasiveness, he took the project over without losing Neil's friendship, and I published *Politics and Catholic Freedom*, the first of my books on the papacy.

Bill lived and wrote and lectured—and played and socialized and exercised—at a furious pace. Partly this was because he bored so easily. But partly it was to make money. He was commonly thought of as a spoiled rich boy. But he had never had the kind of money people imagined. His wife did—she came from a family far wealthier than his. But he did not want to live on her inheritance. Bill's oilman father had drilled many a dry hole. John Judis did the numbers, and said that the senior Buckley's money was exaggerated. After the father's death, Bill's oldest brother, John, a heavy drinker, ran the company without great skill.

Bill's own investments, especially in radio stations, set back rather than advanced his financial affairs—as always, he was too in love with risk. But he made a good living, initially from his heavy lecture schedule and then from his profitable series of spy novels. I remember how delighted he was, in 1960, when for the first time he was paid a dollar a word for a magazine article (a high sum then). He did not, of course, have to work for a living. He could have lived, like his siblings, on a lower scale than the one he did. But Bill wanted to maintain the swashbuckling yachts, the custom-made limousine, the ski lodge in Switzerland, and the great generosity of his gifts to others; and he did not want to do this on his wife's money. Thus he secretly acquired what some will consider his least plausible identity, that of a working stiff.

For more years than I wish, Bill and I were estranged. Though he had backed off from the southern view of black inferiority, he thought that Martin Luther King Jr. was hurting the country in its struggle with Communism by criticizing America, and he was a strong friend of Henry Kissinger in defending the Vietnam War. Even my own friend at the magazine, Frank Meyer, tried to have my comments against Richard Nixon killed, and Bill finally refused to publish my claim that there was no conservative rationale for our ruinous engagement in Vietnam. Later, when I moved out of my office at Northwestern and reduced my library to what would fit into my home, I gave a used-bookstore owner the pick of my volumes at the university. He went off with many titles that Bill had inscribed to me, and when irate fans of his found them in the store, they bought them and sent them back to him, calling me an ingrate for selling his gifts.

When Bill's service in the CIA under Howard Hunt came to light during the Watergate scandal, I wrote a column about Bill's CIA connections. Perhaps he thought I was using confidential knowledge he had given me on the tapes I had made for his biography; but I used nothing that was not public knowledge by then. He circulated my column to the *National Review* board of editors with the marginal notation, "I think

we should smash him"—an item that Judis found in Bill's papers at Yale. For a time the magazine ran recurring "Wills Watch" features, recording the latest liberal abomination I was guilty of. Rick Brookhiser, an editor at the magazine, writes in his new memoir of working with Bill:

It was clear to me as a reader of *National Review* that Wills had been an important figure at the magazine, if only because the magazine continued to needle him. One cover pasted Wills's head on a famous image of Black Panther Huey Newton, enthroned with spear and shotgun on his wicker chair.

John Leonard, another "*National Review* apostate," as Bill called us, told Judis:

When Garry said what was happening to blacks was more important than what was reflected in the magazine, and it hurts me personally, morally, he spoke to that best part, that most vulnerable part of the Buckleys. It [the disagreement] went from blacks to Nixon to Vietnam.

M. Joseph Sobran, the principal Wills Watcher, said in comparing me with another "defector": "I don't think Kevin Phillips got anywhere near [Buckley's] heart the way that Garry Wills had. [Buckley] didn't covet Phillips's esteem the way he had Garry's."

When Bill went to speak at Yale, on one of his innumerable visits there, my son, Garry L. Wills, was in the line of students waiting to shake his hand. When my son gave his name as Garry Wills, Bill said, "No relation, I hope." Garry, who can be as pixieish as Bill, serenely said, "None at all"—which left Bill turning back with puzzled looks as he moved on down the line. On another occasion, Bill's son, Christopher, whom I had met years before when he was the boat boy on Bill's yacht, was a student at Yale, and he invited me to come speak at the annual *Yale Daily News* dinner. I suspected that Christopher was in one of his moments of conflict with his father, and I declined to take part in that drama.

But Bill's wonderful and selfless sister Priscilla, who always kept me in her loving circle, trusted to the real regard Bill and I still had for each other. She called me in 2005 and said it was silly for those who had been such friends not to be talking to each other. She set up a dinner at our old restaurant, Paone, where Bill and I resumed our friendship, and after that, our correspondence. Bill wrote to tell me he had given my *What Jesus Meant* as a Christmas gift to friends. It was clear that our old disagreements had been transcended. And whereas Bill had defended the Vietnam War, leading us to part company so many years before, he ended up a critic of the Iraq War.

When Bill suggested on *The Charlie Rose Show* that he was ready to die, I found his words heartbreaking, and I wrote to tell him so. When Priscilla told me that in his last days, weakened by emphysema, he could not move across the room without her pulling him up and supporting him, I thought of the figure—lithe, athletic, prompt—who brought his sailboat to rest with one deft turn of his foot on the wheel, and I grieved for one who had brought so much excitement into my life. ■

Garry Wills is the author of more than 30 books. His most recent, *Martial's Epigrams: A Selection*, was published last year.



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BOOKS

EDITOR'S CHOICE Benjamin Schwarz laments the end of California's modest dream.

ESSAY Sandra Tsing Loh finds that rekindling romance, and saving her marriage, is too much work.

REVIEW Christopher Hitchens on how Lincoln's wretched childhood prefigured his greatness

COVER TO COVER A slacker's miscellany; the long-haul lobby; wuthering Wordsworths; Vishnu anew



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Land of Hope and Glory

THE LATEST VOLUME OF KEVIN STARR'S HISTORY CHRONICLES THE TRIUMPH—AND POINTS TOWARD THE TRAGEDY—OF THE CALIFORNIA GOOD LIFE.

By Benjamin Schwarz

DAVID NOBLE PHOTOGRAPHY/LAMAY

IT WAS A magnificent run. From the end of the Second World War to the mid-1960s, California consolidated its position as an economic and technological colossus and emerged as the country's dominant political, social, and cultural trendsetter. Thanks to wartime and Cold War defense spending, a

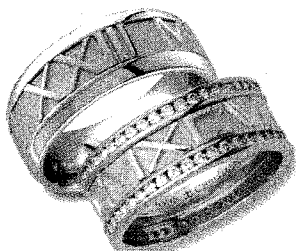
flourishing consumer economy, and a seemingly ever-expanding tax base, the state was at the forefront of the single greatest rise in prosperity in American history. In 1959, wages paid in Los Angeles's working-class and solidly middle-class San Fernando Valley alone were higher than the total wages of 18 states. This

affluence ushered in an era of exhilarating if headlong growth and free spending. The state's public schools—the new, modernist elementary schools with their flat roofs, gleaming clerestory windows, and outdoor lockers; the grand comprehensive high schools (Sacramento, Lowell in San Francisco, and Hollywood and

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1950-1963**

By Kevin Starr
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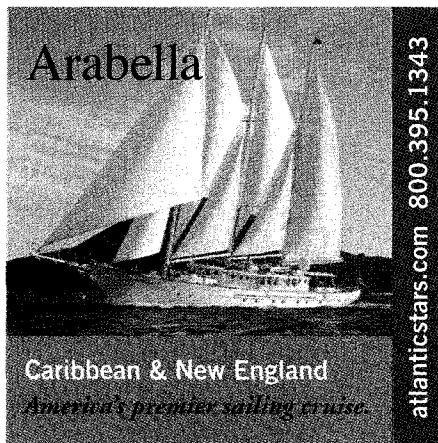
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Fairfax in Los Angeles)—were the envy of the nation. Berkeley, the flagship campus in the UC system, emerged as the best university in the country, probably the world. It was a sweet, vivacious time: California's children, swarming on all those new playgrounds, seemed healthier, happier, taller, and—thanks to that brilliantly clean sunshine—were blonder and more tan than kids in the rest of the country. For better and mostly for worse, it's a time irretrievably lost.

These years are the subject of the eighth volume of Kevin Starr's monumental chronicle of California, collectively titled *Americans and the California Dream*. Starr is a lumper, not a splitter, and in this 500-plus-page history of 14 years, he lovingly and exhaustively chronicles such topics as the byzantine political, fund-raising, and public-relations effort to build Los Angeles's Music Center (and in the process illuminates the central place choral music occupied in Los Angeles's Protestant culture, as well as the tension—once intense, now faint but unmistakable—between the Jewish Westside and the ever-declining WASP establishment of downtown, Hancock Park, and Pasadena); the evolution of the surfing, rock-climbing, and hot-rod subcultures; Zen Buddhism's pervasive influence on California art and design; the *California Water Plan* of 1957 (the template for the 700-mile network of reservoirs, pumping stations, canals, pipes, and aqueducts that carries almost 2 billion gallons of water daily from Northern California to the south and remains the largest water project in world history); and, in deadly detail, the career of Dave Brubeck.

But neither this installment nor the series as a whole succumbs to muddle, because Starr consistently returns to his leitmotif: the California dream. By this he means something quite specific—and prosaic. California, as he's argued in earlier volumes, promised "the highest possible life for the middle classes." It wasn't a paradise for world-beaters; rather, it offered "a better place for ordinary people." That place always meant "an improved and more affordable domestic life": a small but stylish and airy house marked by a fluidity of indoor and outdoor space, such as the ubiquitous California bungalow ("the

closest thing to a democratic art that has ever been produced," as the architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter have written) and a lush backyard—the stage, that is, for "family life in a sunny climate." It also meant some public goods: decent roads, plentiful facilities for outdoor recreation, and the libraries and schools that helped produce the Los Angeles "common man" who, as that jaundiced easterner James M. Cain described him in 1933, "addresses you in easy grammar, completes his sentences, shows familiarity with good manners, and in addition gives you a pleasant smile."

Until the Second World War, California had proffered this Good Life only to people already in the middle class—the small proprietors, farmers, and professionals, largely transplanted midwesterners, who defined the long-underindustrialized state culturally and politically. But the war and the decades-long boom that followed extended the California dream to a previously unimaginable number of Americans of modest means. Here Starr records how that dream possessed the national imagination (and thereby helped define middle-class aspirations and an ideal of domestic life that survives to this day) and how the Golden State—fleeting, as it turns out—accommodated Americans' "conviction that California was the best place in the nation to seek and attain a better life."

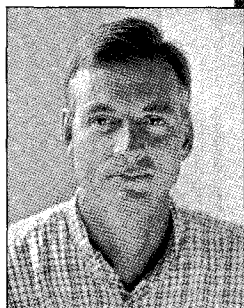
In the brief era Starr examines, the world rushed in to grab that life: the state's population nearly doubled between 1950 and 1970. This *dolce vita* was, as Starr makes clear, a democratic one: the ranch houses with their sliding glass doors and orange trees in the backyard might have been more sprawling in La Cañada and Orinda than they were in the working-class suburbs of Lakewood and Hayward, but family and social life in nearly all of them centered on the patio, the barbecue, and the swimming pool. The beaches were publicly owned and hence available to all—as were such glorious parks as Yosemite, Chico's Bidwell, the East Bay's Tilden, and San Diego's Balboa. Golf and tennis, year-round California pursuits, had once been limited to the upper class, but thanks to proliferating publicly supported courses and courts

(thousands of public tennis courts had already been built in L.A. in the 1930s), they became fully middle-class. This shared outdoor-oriented, informal, California way of life democratized—some would say homogenized—a society made up of people of varying attainments and income levels. These people were overwhelmingly white and native-born, and their common culture revolved around nurturing and (publicly) educating their children. Until the 1980s, a California prep was all but oxymoronic. True, the comprehensive high schools had commercial, vocational, and college-prep tracks (good grades in the last guaranteed admission to Berkeley or UCLA—times have definitely changed). But, as Starr concludes from his survey of yearbooks and other school records, “there remained a common experience, especially in athletics, and a mutual respect among young people heading in different directions.”

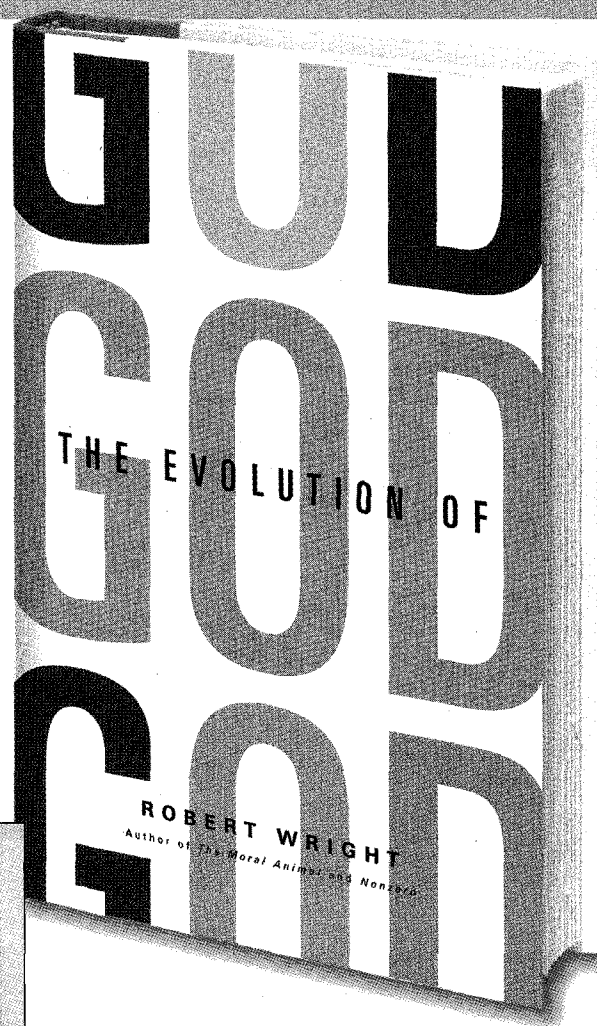
To a Californian today, much of what Starr chronicles is unrecognizable. (Astonishing fact: Ricky Nelson and the character he played in that quintessential idealization of suburbia, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, attended Hollywood High, a school that is now 75 percent Hispanic and that *The New York Times* accurately described in 2003 as “a typically overcrowded, vandalism-prone urban campus.”) Granted, a version of the California Good Life can still be had—by those Starr calls the “fiercely competitive.” That’s just the heartbreak: most of us are merely ordinary. For nearly a century, California offered ordinary people better lives than they could lead perhaps anywhere else in the world. Today, reflecting our intensely stratified, increasingly mobile society, California affords the Good Life only to the most gifted and ambitious, regardless of their background. That’s a deeply undemocratic betrayal of California’s dream—and of the promise of American life. As R. H. Tawney wrote, “Opportunities to rise, which can, of their very nature, be seized only by the few,” cannot “substitute for a general diffusion of the means of civilization, which are needed by all men whether they rise or not.” ■

Benjamin Schwarz is The Atlantic's literary editor and national editor.

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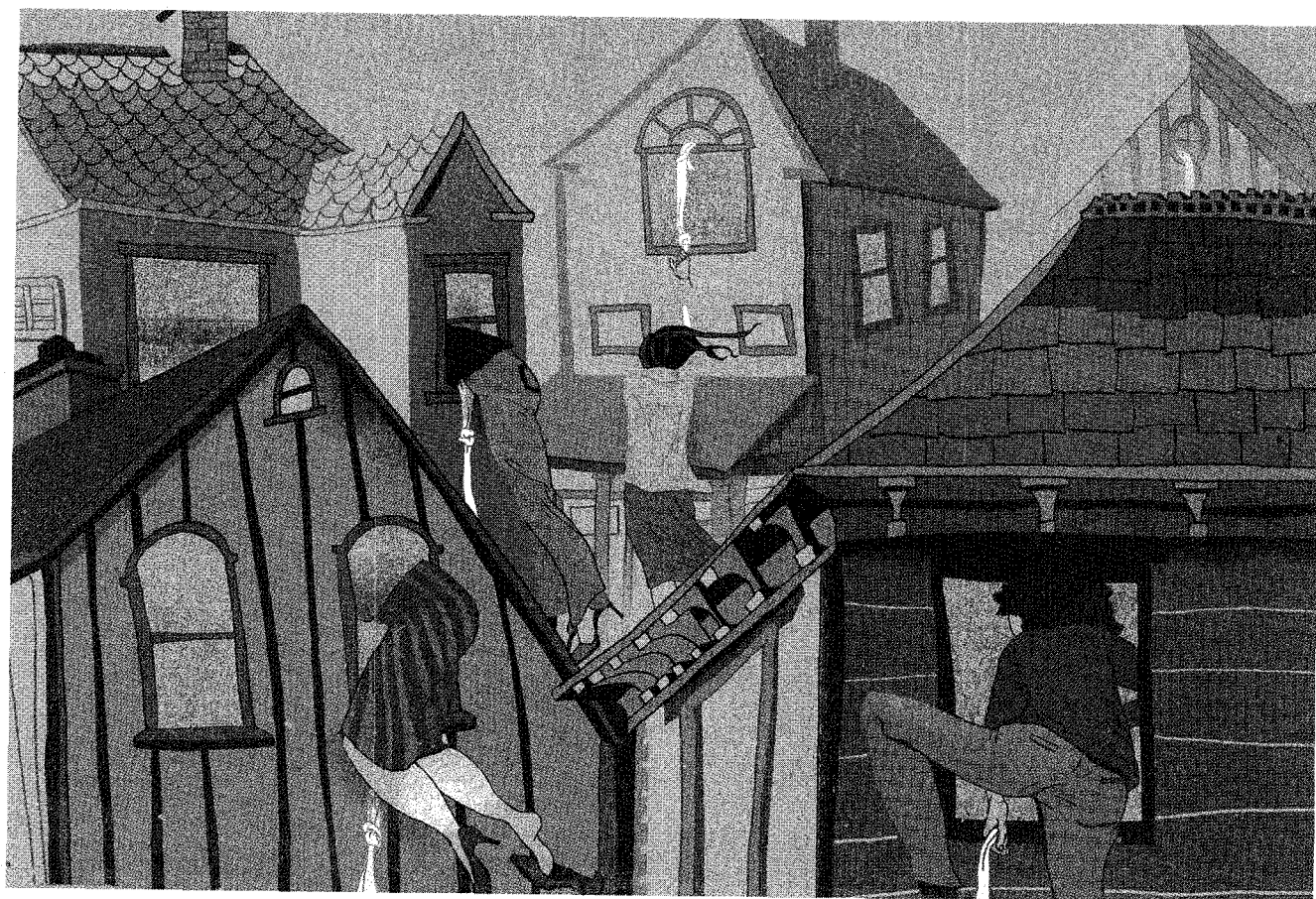
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Let's Call the Whole Thing Off

THE AUTHOR IS ENDING HER MARRIAGE. ISN'T IT TIME YOU DID THE SAME?

By Sandra Tsing Loh

SADLY, AND TO my horror, I am divorcing. This was a 20-year partnership. My husband is a good man, though he did travel 20 weeks a year for work. I am a 47-year-old woman whose commitment to monogamy, at the very end, came unglued. This turn of events was a surprise. I don't generally even enjoy men; I had an entirely manageable life and planned to go to my grave taking with me, as I do most nights to my bed, a glass of merlot and a good book. Cataclysmically changed, I disclosed everything. We cried, we rent our hair, we bewailed the fate of our children. And yet at the end of the day—literally during a five o'clock

counseling appointment, as the golden late-afternoon sunlight spilled over the wall of Balinese masks—when given the final choice by our longtime family therapist, who stands in as our shaman, mother, or priest, I realized ... no. Heart-shattering as this moment was—a gravestone sunk down on two decades of history—I would not be able to replace the romantic memory of my fellow transgressor with the more suitable image of my husband, which is what it would take in modern-therapy terms to knit our family's domestic construct back together. In women's-magazine parlance, I did not have the strength

to “work on” falling in love again in my marriage. And as Laura Kipnis railed in *Against Love*, and as everyone knows, *Good relationships take work*.

Which is not to say I'm against work. Indeed, what also came out that afternoon were the many tasks I—like

so many other working/co-parenting/married mothers—have been doing for so many years and tearfully declared I would continue doing. I can pick up our girls from school every day; I can feed them

dinner and kiss their noses and tell them stories; I can take them to their doctor and dentist appointments; I can earn my half—sometimes more—of the money;

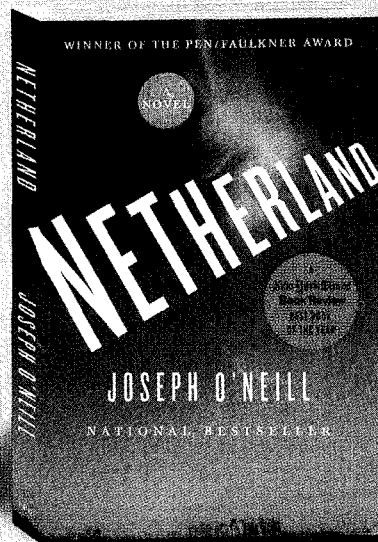
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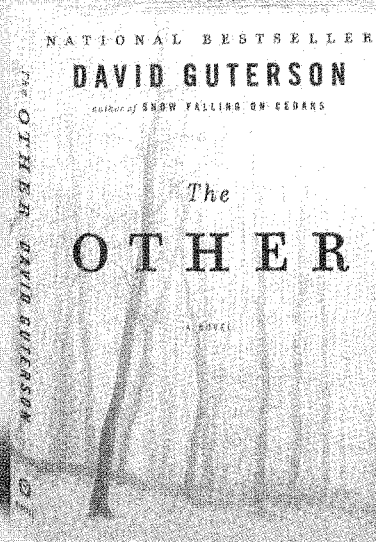
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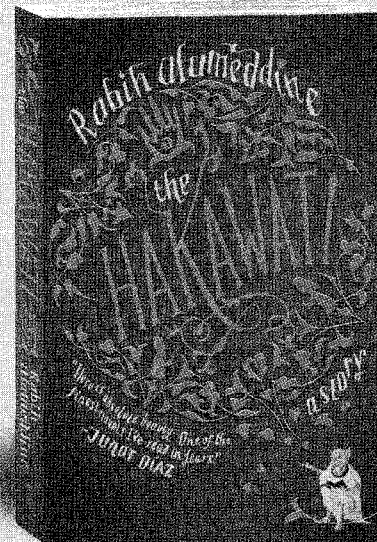
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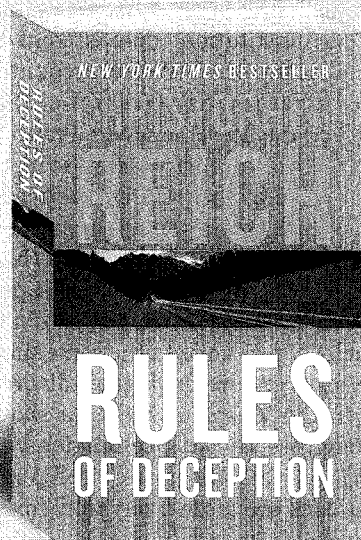
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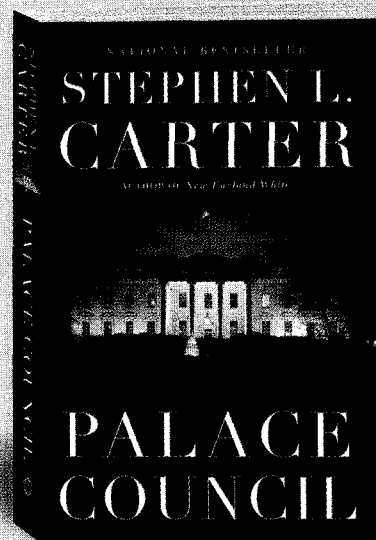
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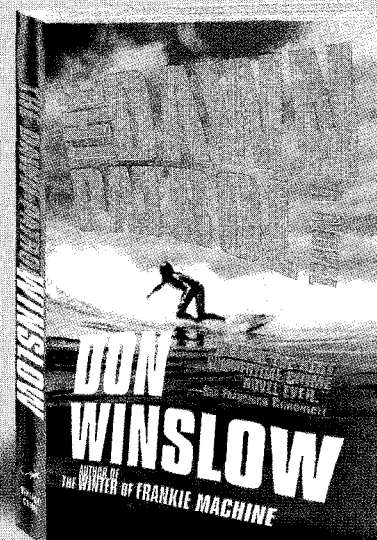
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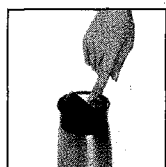
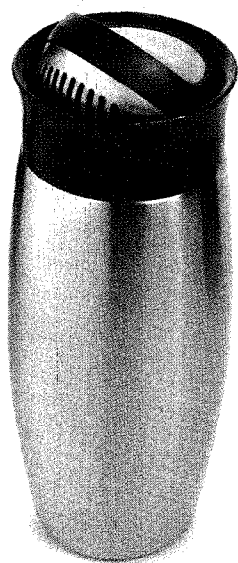
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I can pay the bills; I can refinance the house at the best possible interest rate; I can drive my husband to the airport; in his absence, I can sort his mail; I can be home to let the plumber in on Thursday between nine and three, and I can wait for the cable guy; I can make dinner conversation with any family member; I can ask friendly questions about anybody's day; I can administer hugs as needed to children, adults, dogs, cats; I can empty the litter box; I can stir wet food into dry.

Which is to say I can work at a career and child care and joint homeownership and even platonic male-female friendship. However, in this cluttered forest of my 40s, what I cannot authentically reconjure is the ancient dream of brides, even with the Oprah fluffery of weekly "date nights," when gauzy candlelight obscures the messy house, child talk is nixed and silky lingerie donned, so the two of you can look into each other's eyes and feel that "spark" again. Do you see? Given my staggering working mother's to-do list, I cannot take on yet another arduous home- and self-improvement project, that of rekindling our romance. Sobered by this failure as a mother—which is to say, my failure as a wife—I've since begun a journey of reading, thinking, and listening to what's going on in other 21st-century American families.

And along the way, I've begun to wonder, what with all the abject and swallowed misery: Why do we still insist on marriage? Sure, it made sense to agrarian families before 1900, when to farm the land, one needed two spouses, grandparents, and a raft of children. But now that we have white-collar work and washing machines, and our life expectancy has shot from 47 to 77, isn't the idea of lifelong marriage obsolete?

I sense you picking up the first stone to hurl, even if you yourself may be twice or even three times divorced. Such a contradiction turns out to be uniquely American. Just because marriage didn't work for us doesn't mean

we don't believe in the institution. Just because our own marital track records are mixed doesn't mean our hearts don't lift at the sight of our daughters' Tiffany-blue wedding invitations. After all, we can easily arrange to sit far from our exes, across the flower-bedecked aisle, so as not to roil the festive day. Just because we know that nearly half of U.S. marriages end in divorce—including perhaps even those of our own par-

ents (my dearest childhood wish was not just that my parents would divorce, but also that my raging father would burst into flames)—doesn't mean we aren't confident ours is the one that will beat the odds. At least that is the attitudinal yin/yang described by Andrew J. Cherlin in his scrupulously argued *Marriage-Go-Round*: compared with our western European counterparts, Americans are far more credulous about marriage. In World Values Surveys taken at the turn of the millennium, fewer Americans agreed with the statement "Marriage is an outdated institution" than citizens of any other Western country surveyed (compare the U.S.'s tiny 10 percent with France's 36 percent). We are also more religious—more Americans (60 percent) say they attend

religious services once a month than do the Vatican-centric Italians (54 percent) or, no surprise, the laissez-faire French (12 percent). At the same time, Americans endure the highest divorce rate in the Western world. In short, although we say we love religion and marriage, Cherlin notes, "religious Americans are more likely to divorce than secular Swedes."

Cherlin believes the reason for this paradox is that Americans hold two values at once: a culture of marriage and a culture of individualism. Or is it an American spirit of optimism wedded, if you will, to a Tocquevillian spirit of restlessness that inspires three out of four Americans to say they believe marriage is for life, while only one in four agreed with the notion that even

THE MARRIAGE-GO-ROUND

By Andrew J. Cherlin

KNOPF

THE GOOD MARRIAGE

By Sandra Blakeslee and Judith S. Wallerstein

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

OPEN MARRIAGE

By Nena and George O'Neill

M. EVANS

WHY HIM? WHY HER?

By Helen Fisher

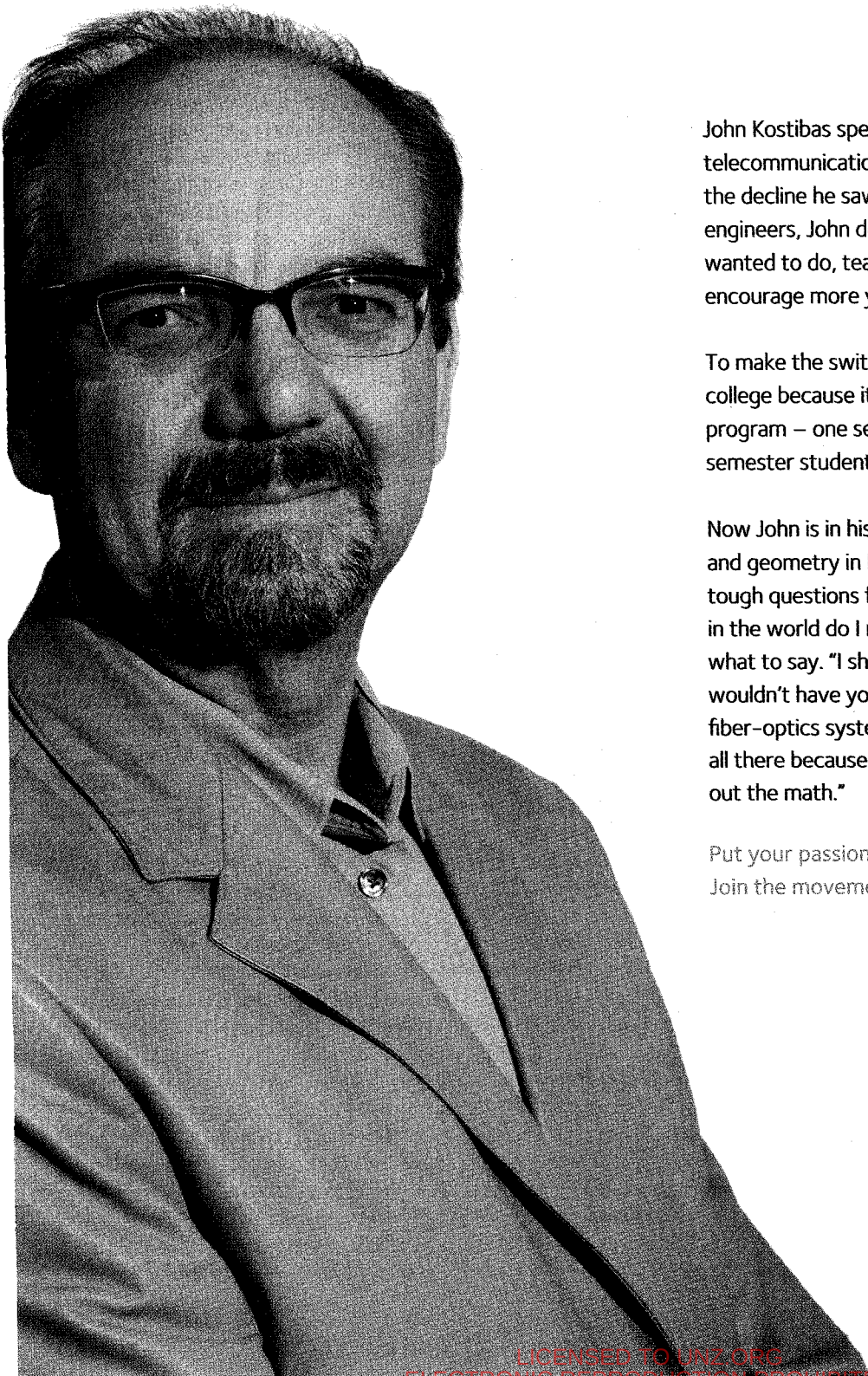
HENRY HOLT

GENERATION EX

By Karen Karbo

BLOOMSBURY

Then ; Now



John Kostibas spent decades as an engineer in the telecommunications industry. At 54, troubled by the decline he saw in the quality and quantity of engineers, John decided to do what he'd always wanted to do, teach high school math, and encourage more young people.

To make the switch, John chose a local community college because it offered a fast-track certification program – one semester studying and one semester student teaching.

Now John is in his encore career, teaching algebra and geometry in Lewisville, Texas. When he gets tough questions from his students – like, "Why in the world do I need to learn this?" – he knows what to say. "I show them that without it, you wouldn't have your tiny cell phone or the fiber-optics systems that transmit movies. It's all there because someone sat down and worked out the math."

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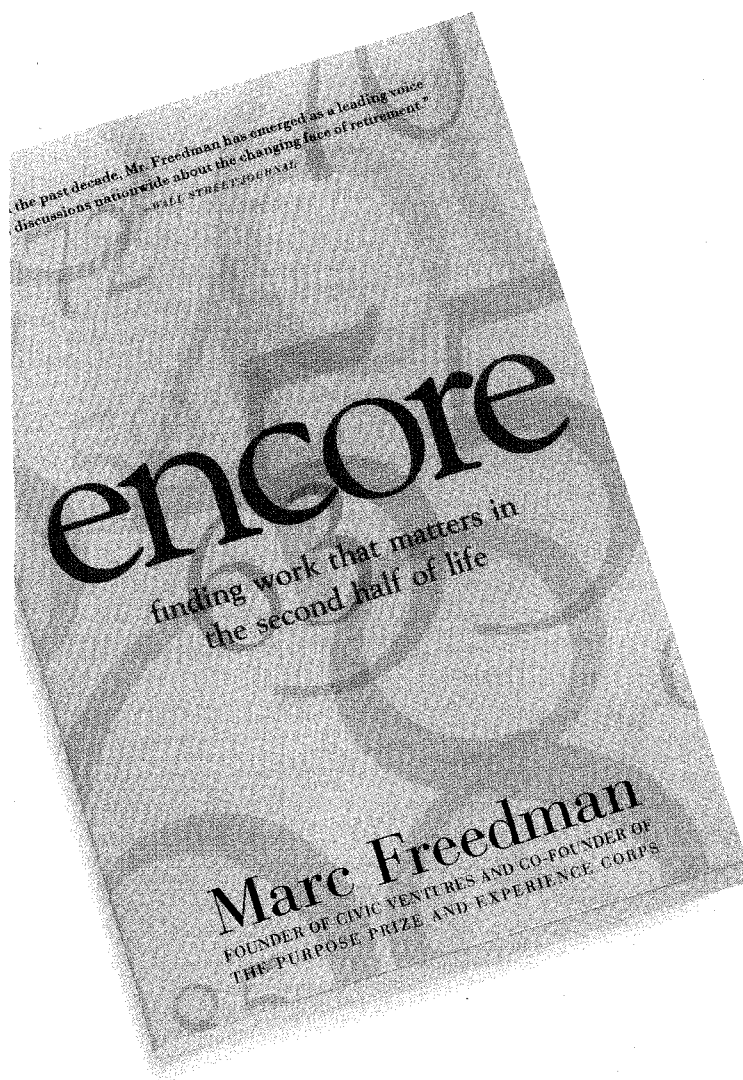
if a marriage is unhappy, one should stay put for the sake of the children. If America is a "divorce culture," it may be partly because we are a "marriage culture," since we both divorce *and* marry (a projected 90 percent of us) at some of the highest rates anywhere on the globe. Hence Cherlin's cautionary advice consists of two words—"Slow down"—his chief worry about our frenetic marriage-go-round being its negative impact on our children. In fact, while having two biological parents at home is, the statistics tell us, best for children, a single-parent household is almost as good. The harm comes, Cherlin argues, from parents continually coupling with new partners, so that the children are forced to bond, or compete for attention, with ever-new actors. These are the youngsters who are likely to suffer, according to a measurable matrix of factors such as truancy, disobedience in school, and teen pregnancy. Instead of preaching marriage, Cherlin says, we should preach domestic stability for children. Is marriage the best way to ensure this? Apparently not, at least not the way we do it in America.

RACHEL IS ONE of the women I regularly dine with, now that I have a divorced person's oddly relaxed—oddly civilized, even horribly French?—joint-custody schedule. It has been almost 10 years since I dined with adults on a weekly basis. My domestic evenings have typically revolved around five o'clock mac and cheese under bright lighting and then a slow melt into dishes and *SpongeBob* ... because yet another of my marital failings was that I was never able to commit to a nanny. Even though my husband and I both drew full-time incomes, I, as a writer, worked at home and hence was ambivalent, because if I had daily in-house help, what was my role as a mother? Would I be emotionally displaced? Also, I secretly worried that using domestic help was exploitative—recall Barbara Ehrenreich's dictum that she'd never let another woman scrub her toilets. Yea, these are the various postfeminist hurdles that stretched before me at 2:00 a.m. as I lay awake in our bed, contorted not just by cats but by two children kicking me from both sides—Exhibit A of lazy, undisciplined attachment parenting.

Imagine driving with me now to Rachel's house for our new 40-something social hobby—the Girls' Night dinner. Leap not from my car, even though I realize—given my confessed extramarital affair, avowed childhood desire to see my father explode into flames, and carpet of tattered Happy Meal wrappers—I may not strike you as the most reliable explicator of modern marriage. Still, we forge on, and what I'd like to do now is recant for a moment and not be quite so hard on marriage, which I think is a very good fit for *some* people. It certainly has been for Judith S. Wallerstein (married more than 48 years, as the jacket flap indicates), co-author with Sandra Blakeslee of the 1995 book *The Good Marriage: How and Why Love Lasts*. Through close observation of 50 happily married couples, the authors identified four templates for lasting nuptial success. The Romantic Marriage thrives on the spark of love that never dies. (Think of those affectionate 80-somethings in convalescent homes, still holding hands.) The Rescue Marriage features partners who fit each other like lost puzzle pieces, healing each other from mutual childhood traumas. (And then there are those shrieky co-dependent pairs: think of fiercely attached couples whose commitment is cemented by a commitment to unwholesome habits. Said a friend of his 70-something WASP parents, who sally off to their frequent cruises with huge Lavoris bottles filled with gin: "What they share is an enthusiasm for drinking.") The Traditional Marriage succeeds because the man works while the woman runs the home, a clear and valuable division of labor.

Today, the most common type of marriage is the Companionate Marriage, in which husband and wife each have a career, and they co-parent and co-housekeep according to gender-free norms they negotiate. Three decades ago, in their 1972 runaway best seller, *Open Marriage*, Nena and George O'Neill suggested that such a modern arrangement might even include sexual freedom. But as we all know, the Sexually Open Marriage fizzled with the lava lamp, because it is just downright icky for most people. How, then, has marriage evolved? In what sorts of partnerships do we find ourselves in

Then ; Now



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the 21st century? Enter with me, finally, the home of my friend Rachel. (To appease the diligent *Atlantic* fact checkers, I must now pause to announce that I've carefully disguised some of the individuals whose lives we're about to dissect.) Picture a stunning two-story Craftsman—exposed wood, Batchelder tile fireplace, caramel-warm beams, Tiffany lamps on Mission tables—nestled in the historic enclave in Pasadena dubbed Bungalow Heaven. Rachel, 49, an environmental lawyer, is married to Ian, 48, a documentary-film editor. They have two sons, 9 and 11, whom Ian—in every way the model dad—has whisked off this evening to junior soccer camp (or drum lessons or similar; the boys' impressive whirl of activities is hard to keep track of). Rachel is cooking dinner for three of us: Ellen (a writer, married with children), Renata (violinist, single, lithe, and prowling at 45), and me. Rachel is, more accurately, reheating dinner; the dish is something wonderfully subtle yet complex, like a saffron-infused porcini risotto, that Ian made over the weekend and froze for us, in Tupperware neatly labeled with a Sharpie, because this is the sort of thoughtful thing he does. Ian subscribes to *Cook's Illustrated* online and a bevy of other technically advanced gourmet publications—he's always perfecting some polenta or bouillabaisse. If someone requests a cheeseburger, he will fire back with an über-cheeseburger, a fluffy creation of marbled Angus beef, Stilton, and homemade ketchup. Picture him in bike shorts (he's a cyclist), hovering over a mandala of pots that are always simmering, quietly simmering. To Ian's culinary adventurousness, Rachel attributes the boys' sophisticated taste buds—they eagerly eat everything: curry, paella, seaweed, soba noodles. My own girls are strictly mac-and-cheese-centric (but I've been told in therapy not to keep beating myself up over the small things).

Since her own home fires seemed to roar so warmly, I was hesitant to hit Rachel with news of my breakup, and it is true that her first reaction was a degree of disbelief and horror even more pronounced than everyone else's in our village of longtime marrieds. "But what about the children?" she wailed. I explained that since their parents

had been in parallel motion since they were born, the girls appeared—on the surface at least—to be unfazed. On top of my musician husband's roadwork, some years I'd logged 200 shows as a theater performer, carrying my babies in buckets to hotel rooms. In addition, when my girls' cousins—at ages 6, 5, and 2—suddenly lost their mother, through illness, we had done an emergency move-in with my brother for two years (while my husband remained on the road), so my girls were more used to sitting down to dinner with an extended family tribe than with one father and one mother. Now elementary age, my children seem relatively content as long as they remain in their own house, their own beds, and their own school, with Mom and Dad coming and going as usual (and when Dad's in the house, I pick them up from school every day so they always see me). Their most ardent daily fixations continue to be amassing more Pokémon cards and getting a dog named Noodles to add to their menagerie of five fish and two cats, Midnite and Cutface.

But it is now our second Girls' Night dinner since my horrifying announcement, and Rachel has eschewed Ian's customary wine-club Bordeaux and is mixing some alarmingly strong martinis.

Leaning forward heavily across the bar, she swirls her glass and huskily drops the bomb: "I have to tell you—since we talked, I too have started thinking divorce." "No!" we girls exclaim. With a stab of nausea, I suddenly feel as though now that I've touched my pool of friends with my black pen, a cloud of ink is enveloping them.

"You can't!" Renata cries. "Ian—he's the perfect father! The perfect husband! Look at this ... kitchen!"

It's true: the kitchen is a prime example of Ian's contribution to their union. He based the design of the remodel on an old farmhouse kitchen they saw during their trip to Tuscany, and of course—carpentry being another of his hobbies—he did all the details himself, including building the shelves. One of the room's marvels is how ingeniously and snugly all the specialty kitchenware is housed—the hanging copper pots, the garlic press, the mandolin, the lemon zester, the French press coffeemaker ...

"Ian won't have sex with me," Rachel says flatly. "He has not touched my body in two years. He says it's because I've gained weight." Again, we stoutly protest, but she goes on. "And he thinks I'm a bad mother—he says I'm sloppy and inattentive."

The list of violations unfurls. Last week, Rachel mistakenly gave the wrong medication to the dog, a mistake Ian would never make. She also forgot to deglaze the saucepan and missed the window to book the family's Seattle flights on Expedia, whose chiming bargains Ian meticulously tracks.

Rachel sees herself as a failed mother, and is depressed and chronically overworked at her \$120,000-a-year job (which she must cling to for the benefits because Ian freelances). At night, horny and sleepless, she paces the exquisite kitchen, gobbling mini Dove bars. The main breadwinner, Rachel is really the Traditional Dad, but instead of being handed her pipe and slippers at six, she appears to be marooned in a sexless remodeling project with a passive-aggressive Competitive Wife.

Rachel had even asked Ian point-blank: "Do you want a divorce?" And Ian said absolutely not—they must show discipline and work at the marriage (again with the *work!*), since any domestic upset could negatively affect the boys, who were now facing a particularly fraught time at their new school, where they have an extraordinarily challenging roster of extracurricular activities and a quarterly testing schedule.

"You know, it's funny," says Ellen, after a moment of gloom. (Passing note: Ellen has been married for 18 years, and she also, famously, never has sex. There were the hot 20s with Ron and the making-the-babies 30s, and in the 40s there is ... nothing. Ellen had originally picked Ron because she was tired of all the bad boys, and Ron was settle-down husband material. What she didn't know was that after the age of 38, thanks to Mr. Very Settled-Down, she was never going to have regular sex with a man again.)

To be reprimanded in the home by male kitchen bitches, and then, in the bedroom, to be ignored—it's a bum deal.

"When marriage was invented," Ellen continues, "it was considered to be a kind of trade union for a woman, her protection against the sexually wandering male. But what's happened to the sexually wandering male?"

In our parents' era, the guy hit 45, got the toupee, drove the red Porsche, and left his family for the young, hot secretary. We are unable to imagine any of the husbands driving anything with fewer than five seat belts.

"Ron only goes as far as the den," Ellen says. "He has his Internet porn bookmarked on the computer."

"Ian has his *Cook's Illustrated*," Rachel adds. "And his—his men's online fennel club."

Of the four of us, Renata has the fastest-thrumming engine, as evidenced by her rabid in-the-moment sex-tryst texting ("omg he flyz in 2nite on red i @

2 am!!!"). One imagines a string of men toppled behind her in ditches like crashed race cars.

"My problem is, I'm a dopamine freak!" She waggles her hands in the air. "Dopamine!"

"Helen Fisher!" Ellen exclaims, pointing at her.

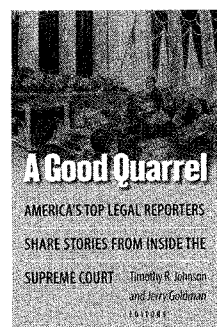
Fisher, a women's cult figure and an anthropologist, has

long argued that falling in love—and falling out of love—is part of our evolutionary biology and that humans are programmed not for lifelong monogamy, but for serial monogamy. (In stretches of four years, to be exact, approximately the time it takes to get one kid safely through infancy.)

Why Him? Why Her? explains the hormonal forces that trigger humans to be romantically attracted to some people and not to others (a phenomenon also documented in the animal world). Fisher posits that each of us gets dosed in the womb with different levels of hormones that impel us toward one of four basic personality types:

- **The Explorer**—the libidinous, creative adventurer who acts "on the spur of the moment." Operative neurochemical: dopamine.
- **The Builder**—the much calmer

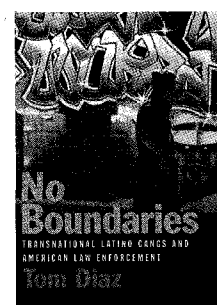
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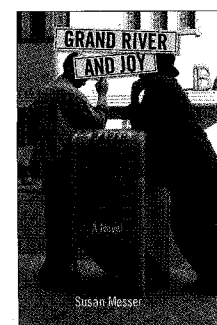
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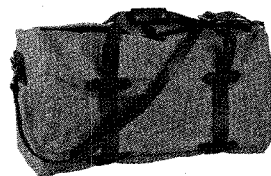
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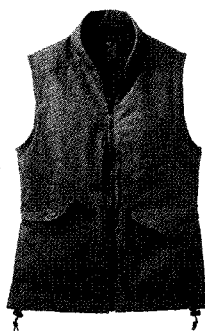


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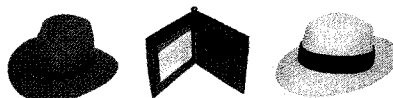
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person who has "traditional values." The Builder also "would rather have loyal friends than interesting friends," enjoys routines, and places a high priority on taking care of his or her possessions. Operative neurotransmitter: serotonin.

■ **The Director**—the "analytical and logical" thinker who enjoys a good argument. The Director wants to discover all the features of his or her new camera or computer. Operative hormone: testosterone.

■ **The Negotiator**—the touchy-feely communicator who imagines "both wonderful and horrible things happening" to him- or herself. Operative hormone: estrogen, then oxytocin.

Fisher reviewed personality data from 39,913 members of Chemistry.com. Explorers made up 26 percent of the sample, Builders 28.6 percent, Directors 16.3 percent, Negotiators 29.1 percent. While Explorers tend to be attracted to Explorers, and Builders tend to be attracted to Builders, Directors are attracted to Negotiators, and vice versa.

Exclaims Ellen, slapping the book: "This is why my marriage has been dead for 15 years. I'm an Explorer married to a Builder!" (Ron literally is a builder—like Ian, he crafts wonderful shelves and also, of course, cooks.) But what can Ellen do? Explorer-Explorer tends to be one of the most unstable combinations, whereas Fisher suspects "most of the world's fifty-year marriages are made by Builders who marry other Builders."

While a Rutgers study suggests that only 38 percent of married people in America describe themselves as happy, we stay married for many good reasons. Take, for instance, the otherwise unaffordability of homeownership.

Some of us stay married because we're in competition with our divorcing 1960s and 1970s parents, who made such a hash of it. What looks appealing to us now, in an increasingly frenetic, digital world, is the 1950s marriage. Writes Karen Karbo, in *Generation Ex*, reminiscing about her mother's evening routine of serving old-fashioned to her dad by the pool:

At the turn of the millennium, our marriages and remarriages bear almost no resemblance to these single-

Scientists studying the universe have concluded that its basic properties are uncannily suited for life. They say, "There are so many life friendly properties that physicists cannot dismiss them as mere accidents. Tweak the laws of physics in just about any way—in this universe anyway—and life as we know it would not exist—nor would we."



Richard W. Wetherill
1906-1989

After reading that paragraph, ask yourself how are people treating our amazingly fine-tuned habitat? Answers might vary, but most would agree that it is often misused to serve human purposes.

This essay intends to draw people's attention to their nonconformance to a little-known law of nature, causing them untold physical, mental, and/or emotional misery as well as any disregard for the safety of planet Earth.

Early in the past century Richard W. Wetherill identified that natural law and presented it in a book entitled, *Tower of Babel*, published and on sale in January 1952. Its correction technique was copied by psychologists in the Philadelphia area, but the book's reference to a natural law of behavior was ignored.

Wetherill's epiphanies and a study of his behavior and that of many thousand others had revealed people's wrong attitude toward the realities of life. After eons of human efforts to quiet turbulent human affairs, they still cry out for solutions.

If we reason from the fact that this planet is the only place in the universe that supports life as we know it, Wetherill suggests the following:

Whoever or whatever created this perfectly constructed planet also created a law governing its inhabitant's behavior. Wetherill called it the **law of absolute right: Right action gets right results**. It defines right as what is truly logical, rational, and honest. As with creation's laws of physics, only by conforming to this behavioral law do people solve their problems and avoid further trouble.

It is well known that not conforming to natural laws results in trouble of one kind or another. By failing to take right action, people unwarily invite myriad problems and trouble that, sooner or later, cause each person's death. No argument here; death is what has

been happening from the beginning of human life to the present generation.

No claims are being made. We are presenting facts that can be verified by anybody observing the cause-and-effect sequence of human existence.

We think that this perfectly constructed universe calls for perfectly behaving occupants and that that result can be achieved when enough persons do their best to conform to nature's behavioral law mentioned earlier.

Wetherill often spoke of the need for a microcosm of a rational society to display right results for others to observe. The adult population of the United States of America *could* be that microcosm in our world population of over seven billion. Don't hesitate! The persons who are conforming to nature's law of behavior are enjoying the right results that the law promises.

No instructions were given ancient peoples regarding a law of gravitation, but they learned to conform to it to stay out of trouble with the force of gravity. Please regard this public-service message as a wake-up call for readers to adapt their behavior to conform to nature's law of absolute right. Be assured, people's truly rational, honest behavior extends the beneficent intent of whoever or whatever created this life-friendly universe and us.

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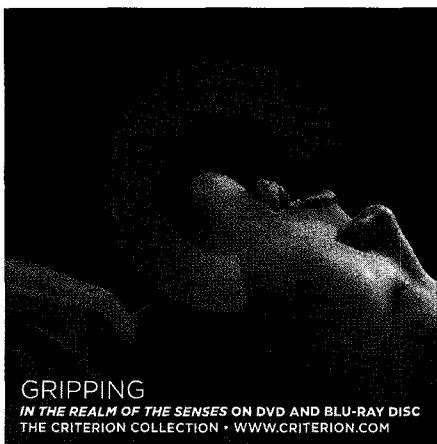
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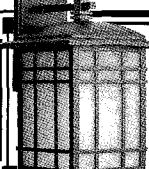
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paycheck, cocktail-hour unions. Once considered sexist and monotonous, these staid marriages are emblems of an easier time. What seemed too dull and constricting a mere fifteen years ago now looks luxurious, like those huge gas-guzzling cars with all that chrome and the tuck-and-roll seats.

Some of us stay married because along with fancy schools, tae kwan do lessons, and home-cooked organic food, the two-parent marriage is another impressive—and rare—attainment to bestow on our fragile, gifted children.

Some of us stay married because ... what else is there? A lonely apartment and a hot plate?

That said, it's clear that females are dissatisfied—more and more, divorce seems to be initiated by women. If marriage is the Old World and what lies beyond is the New World, it's the apparently stable men (comfortable alone in their postfeminist den with their *Cook's Illustrated* and their porn) who are Old Worlders, and the Girls' Night Out, questionnaire-completing women who are the questing New Worlders. They most embody what Tocqueville described as America's "restless temper," or *l'inquiétude du caractère*. (Interestingly, according to *EnlightenNext* magazine, some northern European women are reportedly eschewing their progressive northern European male counterparts and dating Muslims, who are more like "real men.")

To work, to parent, to housekeep, to be the ones who schedule "date night," only to be reprimanded in the home by male kitchen bitches, and then, in the bedroom, to be ignored—it's a bum deal. And then our women's magazines exhort us to rekindle the romance. You rarely see men's magazines exhorting men to rekindle the romance.

So, herewith, some modest proposals. Clearly, research shows that what's best for children is domestic stability and not having to bond with, and to be left by, ever new stepparent figures. Less important is whether or not their overworked parents are logging "date night" (or feeling the magic). So why don't we accept marriage as a splitting-the-mortgage arrangement? As Fisher suggests, rekindling the romance is, for many of us, biologically unnatural,

particularly after the kids come. (Says another friend of mine, about his wife of 23 years: "My heart doesn't lift when she walks in the room. It sinks, slightly.") If high-revving women are sexually frustrated, let them have some sort of French arrangement where they have two men, the postfeminist model dad building shelves, cooking bouillabaisse, and ignoring them in the home, and the occasional fun-loving boyfriend the kids never see. Alternately, if both spouses find life already rather exhausting, never mind chasing around for sex. Long-married husbands and wives should pleasantly agree to be friends, to set the bedroom aglow at night by the mute opening of separate laptops and just be done with it. More than anything, aside from providing insulation from the world at large, that kind of arrangement could be the perfect way to be left alone.

As far as the children are concerned, how about the tribal approach (a natural, according to both primate and human evolution)? Let children between the ages of 1 and 5 be raised in a household of mothers and their female kin. Let the men/husbands/boyfriends come in once or twice a week to build shelves, prepare that bouillabaisse, or provide sex.

Or best of all, after the breast-feeding and toddler years are through, let those nurturing superdads be the custodial parents! Let the Type A moms obsessively work, write checks, and forget to feed the dog. Let the dads then, if they wish, kick out those sloppy working mothers and run effective households, hiring the appropriate staff, if need be. To a certain extent, men today may have more clarity about what it takes to raise children in the modern age. They don't, for instance, have today's working mother's ambivalence and emotional stickiness.

In any case, here's my final piece of advice: avoid marriage—or you too may suffer the emotional pain, the humiliation, and the logistical difficulty, not to mention the expense, of breaking up a long-term union at midlife for something as demonstrably fleeting as love. ■

Sandra Tsing Loh is the author, most recently, of *Mother on Fire*.

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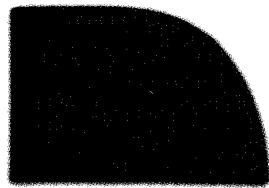


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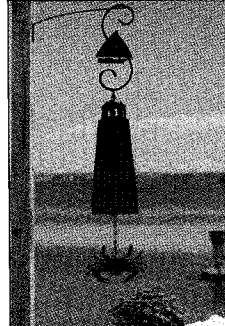


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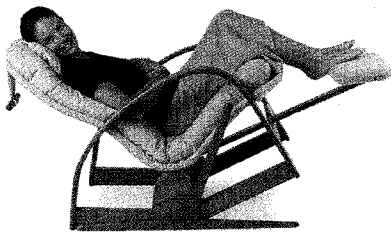


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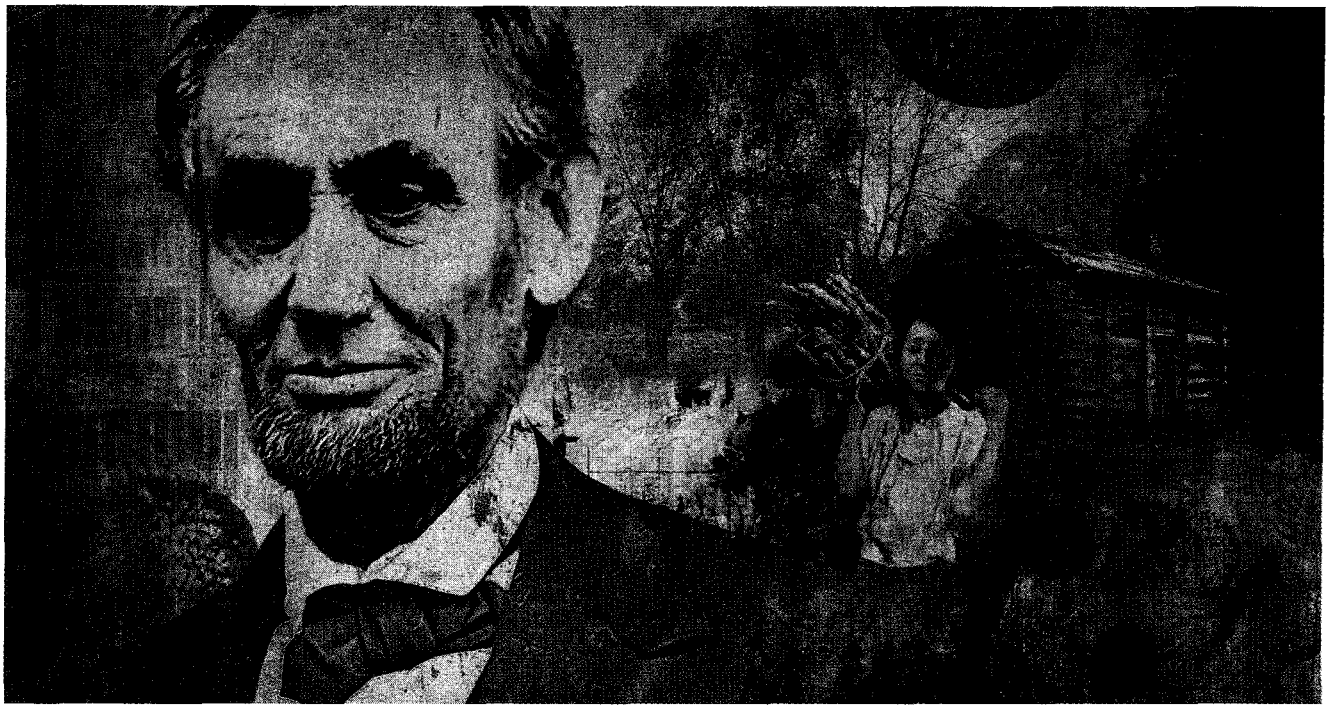
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Misery's Child

THE CRUELTY AND DEGENERACY LINCOLN WAS SUBJECTED TO IN HIS YOUTH FORGED HIS IRON WILL.

By Christopher Hitchens

LINCOLN'S BICENTENNIAL has permitted us to revisit and reconsider every facet of his story and personality, from the Bismarckian big-government colossus so disliked by the traditional right and the isolationists, to the "Great Emancipator" who used to figure on the posters of the American Communist Party, to the reluctant anti-slaver so plausibly caught in Gore Vidal's finest novel. Absent from much of this consideration has been the unfashionable word *destiny*: the sense conveyed by Lincoln of a man who was somehow brought forth by the hour itself, as if his entire life had been but a preparation for that moment.

We cannot get this frisson from other great American presidents. Washington, Jefferson, Madison—these were all experienced members of the existing and indeed preexisting governing class. So was Roosevelt. However exaggerated or invented some parts of the Lincoln legend may be, it is nonetheless a fact that he came from the very

loam and marrow of the new country, and that—unlike the other men I have mentioned—he cannot possibly be imagined as other than an American.

No review could do complete justice to the magnificent two-volume biography that has been so well-wrought by Michael Burlingame, but one way of paying tribute to it is to say that it introduces the elusive idea of destiny from the very start, and one means of illustrating this is to show how the earlier chapters continually prefigure, or body forth, the more momentous events that are to be dealt with in the later ones.

Before I try to demonstrate that, I would like to call attention to something that Professor Burlingame says in his Author's Note:

Many educated guesses, informed by over twenty years of research on Lincoln, appear in this biography. Each such guess might well begin with a phrase like "in all probability," or "it may well be that," or "it seems likely that." Such warnings, if inserted into the text, would prove wearisome;

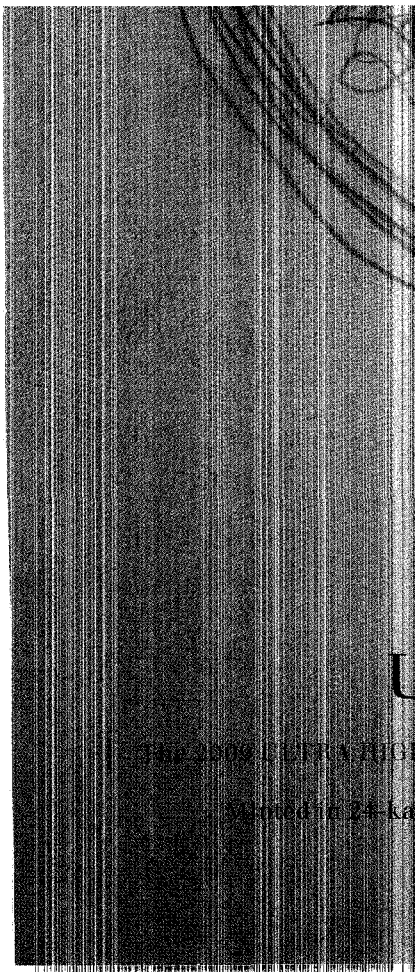
readers are encouraged to provide such qualifiers silently whenever the narrative explores Lincoln's unconscious motivation.

It is agreeable to be informed, when embarking on such a long and demanding work, that one will be treated like a grown-up.

There is, whether intentionally or not, a sort of biblical cadence and flavor to the way in which Burlingame relates the early family history: the grandmother Bathsheba; the father's older brother Mordecai; and Mary Lincoln's half sister, who said that "the reason why Thomas Lincoln grew up unlettered was that his brother Mordecai, having all the land in his possession ... turned Thomas out of the house when the latter was 12 years; so he went out among his relations." The story of Jacob and Esau, and of Naboth's vineyard, was surely known to the person who recounted that.

As for the social background, here is a sentence that conveys a great deal of misery in a very few words. It is





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Burlingame's summary of the area in which Sinking Spring farm, Kentucky, young Abraham's birthplace, was situated. "The neighborhood was thinly settled; the 36-square-mile tax district where the Lincoln farm was located contained 85 taxpayers, 44 slaves, and 392 horses." Lincoln himself said that his early life could be "condensed into a single sentence" from Gray's "Elegy": "The short and simple annals of the poor." But this would be to euphemize his true boyhood situation, which was much more like that of a serf or a domestic animal than of Gray's lowly but sturdy peasantry. To read of the unrelenting coarseness and brutality of the boy's father is lowering to the spirit, as is the shame he felt at his mother's reputation for unchastity. The wretchedness of these surroundings made Lincoln tell a later acquaintance in Illinois: "I have seen a good deal of the back side of this world." (Incidentally, one has to imagine this being said with some kind of wink and nudge: Burlingame is not content, as so many historians are, merely to hint at Lincoln's fondness for broad humor, but furnishes us with some actual examples, which are heavy on the side of scatology and flatulence.)

Lincoln's own experience of legal bondage and hard usage is very graphically told: not only did his father's improvidence deprive him of many necessities, but it resulted in his being hired out as a menial to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water for his father's rough and miserly neighbors. The law as it then stood made children the property of their father, so young Abraham was "hired out" only in the sense of chattel, since he was obliged to turn over his wages. From this, and from the many groans and sighs that are reported of the boy (who still struggled to keep reading, an activity feared and despised by his father, as it was by the owner of Frederick Douglass), we receive a prefiguration of the politician who declared in 1856, "I used to be a slave." In Lincoln's unconcealed resentment toward his male parent, we get an additional glimpse of the man who also declared, in 1858, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master."

Yet the contours and character of the

frontier region also fitted Lincoln for compromise: this was the area of the United States where the two systems were beginning their long, cruel attrition. Both as an aspiring congressman and as an ambitious lawyer, Lincoln managed on occasion to keep silent on the slavery issue and even, when appropriately briefed, to act as counsel for a slaveholder. Burlingame gives an intriguing account of the *Matson* case of 1847, in which, on technical procedural grounds and on the principle of "first come, first served," Lincoln agreed to represent a man who wanted some of his slaves back. On the other hand, he generally steered clear of fugitive-slave cases, "because of his unwillingness to

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A LIFE

By Michael
Burlingame

JOHNS HOPKINS

be a party to a violation of the Fugitive Slave Law, arguing that the way to overcome the difficulty was to repeal the law." Here again, we can see the legalistic and sometimes pedantic mind that exhausted all the possibilities of compromise before coming up with the tortuous form of words that finally became the Emancipation Proclamation.

In rather the same way, Lincoln sought a deft means of negotiating the shoals of the religious question. Burlingame's highly diverting early pages show Lincoln being actively satirical in matters of faith, lampooning preachers, staging mock services, and praying to God "to put stockings on the chickens' feet in winter," in the words of his stepsister Matilda. Reminiscing about frontier Baptists many years later, he told an acquaintance: "I don't like to hear cut and dried sermons. No—when I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees!"

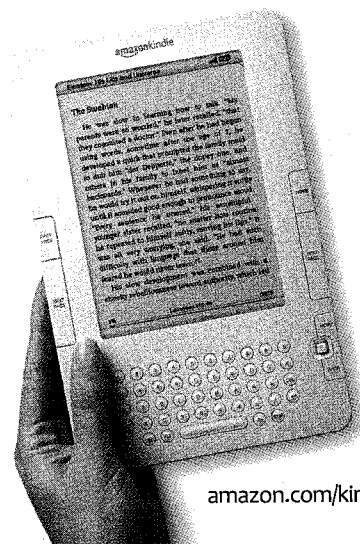
However, in his 1846 election campaign, Lincoln was cornered by the faithful and forced to deny that he was an "open scoffer at Christianity." His handbill on the subject is rightly criticized as too lawyerly by Burlingame, who elegantly points out:

In this document Lincoln seemed to make two different claims: that he never believed in infidel doctrines, and that he never publicly espoused them. If the former were true, the latter would be superfluous; if the former were untrue, the latter would be irrelevant.

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Several moments in the narrative—the bee-fighting preacher being one such—put me in mind of Mark Twain. The tall tales, the dry wit, the broad-gauge humor, the imminence of farce even in grave enterprises: Lincoln's inglorious participation in the Black Hawk War has many points of similarity with Twain's "Private History of a Campaign That Failed." Lincoln was once invited to referee a cock-fight where a bird refused combat. Its enraged owner, one Babb McNabb, flung the creature onto a woodpile, whereat it spread its feathers and crowed mightily. "Yes, you little cuss," yelled McNabb, "you are great on dress parade, but you ain't worth a damn in a fight." Long afterward, confronted with the unmartial ditherings of General George B. McClellan, Lincoln would compare the chief of his army—and subsequent electoral challenger—to McNabb's pusillanimous rooster.

Mark Twain and Frederick Douglass, too, were persons who could only have been original Americans, sprung from American ground. It is engaging and affecting to read of Lincoln's lifelong troubles with spelling and pronunciation (he addressed himself to "Mr. Cheerman" in his famous Cooper Union Speech of 1860) and of his frequent appearance with as much as six inches of shin or arm protruding from his ill-made clothes: truly a Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. Yet despite, or perhaps because of, the extreme harshness of his early life, he was innately opposed to any form of cruelty, and despite his lack of polish and refinement, he almost never stooped to crudity or vulgarity in political speech. Without overdrawing the contrast, Burlingame shows us a Judge Stephen Douglas who was a slave to every kind of anti-Negro demagoguery and political mendacity. And Lincoln bested him, admittedly while hedging on the race question, by constantly stressing the need to secure "to each laborer the whole product of his labor." In more modern terms, we might say that he used the language of class to neutralize racism. (I would say that the account given here of the famous debates surpasses all its predecessors.)

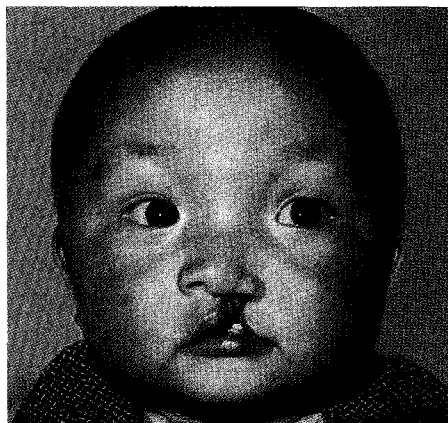
It has lately become fashionable to say that Lincoln was not, or was not

"really," a believer in black-white equality. A thread that runs consistently through Burlingame's narrative is that of self-education on this question, to the eventual point where Lincoln came as close to an egalitarian position as made almost no difference. Even the infamous discussion about the postwar expatriation of black Americans to "colonies" in Africa or on the American isthmus was conducted, by Burlingame's account, with very strict regard on Lincoln's side for the dignity and stature of those whose fate he was discussing. And it goes almost without saying that he had already had every opportunity to see that there was nothing very "superior" about the color white. By the end, Frederick Douglass—who had often criticized him—was able to say that Lincoln was "emphatically the black man's President." And Burlingame's survey of the life and opinions of the "mad racist" John Wilkes Booth makes it equally plain that the white supremacists felt the same way. Still, even this is to understate the universalist intrinsigence with which Lincoln never conceded an inch of American ground, and with which he quarreled with his generals, including McClellan, for referring to the North as "our soil," when every state was still, always, and invariably to be considered a part of the Union.

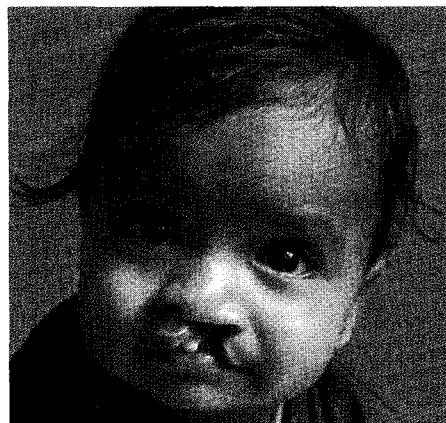
It was once said that the Civil War was the last of the old wars and the first of the new: cavalry and infantry charges gave way to cannon and railways, and sail gave way to steam. It is of great interest to read Lincoln's meditations on the projected postwar expansion of the United States, with a strong emphasis on mining and manufacturing. He had completely shed the bucolic influence of his early career and was looking in the very last days of his life to renew industry and immigration. Before Gettysburg, people would say "the United States are ..." After Gettysburg, they began to say "the United States is ..." That they were able to employ the first three words at all was a tribute to the man who did more than anyone to make that hard transition himself, and then to secure it for others, and for posterity. ■

Christopher Hitchens is an Atlantic contributing editor and a Vanity Fair columnist.

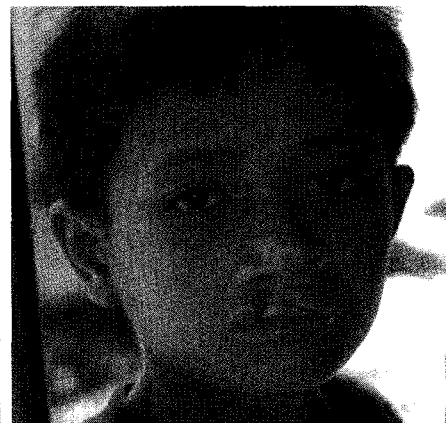
Each Of These Kids Needs Somebody Who Cares Enough To Send \$250. Once.



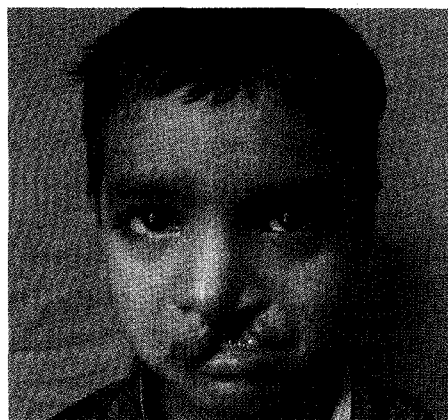
Ming, 6 months, China



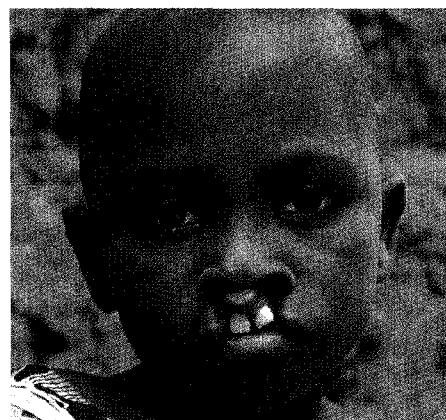
Shiva, 1 year, India



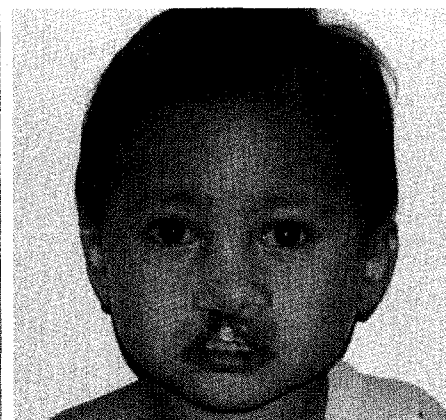
Mot, 13 years, Cambodia



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COVER TO COVER

A Guide to Additional Releases



Clay horses in a rural Tamil Nadu temple, from Wendy Doniger's *The Hindus*.

Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It

Maile Meloy

RIVERHEAD

After two well-received novels, Meloy returns to the short story, the form in which she made her notable debut and to which her lucid style is arrestingly well suited. Many of these stories are set in Meloy's native Montana, and all are about domestic distress—about love, mostly, and the trouble stirred up by its often inconvenient insistence. Several are poised in the limbo of adultery, in the time between act and confession. Always true to her wide-ranging though consistently introspective characters, Meloy convincingly depicts the inchoate emotion that drives people, while also distilling meaning from it.

What Do You Want From Me?

Terri Apter

NORTON

A domestic reckoning of sorts, the latest book by Apter, a psychologist, is an in-depth look at "the inescapable power of in-laws." Arguing that this universal

aspect of intrafamily dynamics has been given short shrift (and consigned to the world's chock-full-of-chestnuts joke bin), the British Apter searches both sides of the pond for illumination, interpreting the responses of 156 interview subjects in the U.S. and the U.K. while taking stock of her own experiences as a wife and mother. The result is something well beyond checkout-aisle platitudes: a keenly perceptive interpretation of the kinship structures, "fracture lines," and recurrent emotions—resentment, ambivalence, acceptance—that are part and parcel of the in-law experience.

Fresh: A Perishable History

Susanne Freidberg

HARVARD

A dietary-cum-social history of the Mark Kurlansky/Michael Pollan sort, this smart, sweeping, and timely volume—appearing at a moment when buying locally and eating organically are fashionably responsible quests—considers the conundrums of industrial freshness. According to Freidberg, a Dartmouth

professor, we all crave access to healthful, seasonal foodstuffs, yet we hunger equally for year-round convenience and value. The result: to open a refrigerator is to access a Pandora's box of compromise and freighted trade. Cold storage, Freidberg argues, has altered tastes, damaged the environment, hurt the consumer, and helped facilitate the less-than-salutary shift from localism to globalism. The "stories" of six staples—beef, eggs, fruit, vegetables, milk, and fish—both reinforce her thesis and stand as discretely engaging narratives, each rendered with clarity and flair. Food, truly, for thought.

The Idler's Glossary

Joshua Glenn and Mark Kingwell

BIBLIOASIS

This delightful chapbook proffers a puckish twofer: a whimsically learned defense of indolence and flaneurship—waged by scouring the philosophical/literary quiver and loosing darts of Schopenhauer, Byron, Bataille, Waugh, Lao-tzu, and others at that ageless bromide of the strong work ethic—and an engagingly etymological lexicon of loafing, past and present. Kingwell, a University of Toronto professor and prolific best-selling author, provides the former; Glenn, the columnist and *Hermeneut* editor/publisher, the latter. The tandem result—which splits the spiritual and stylistic differences between, say, *The Devil's Dictionary* and *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*—is a morally agreeable study in contrasts: high-minded yet fair, droll yet purposeful, erudite yet engaging. The corrective poststructural conclusion? "The genius of idling is not its avoidance of work but rather its construction of a value system entirely independent of work."

The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found

Mary Beard

HARVARD

Doing her level best to unpack the "Pompeii paradox"—how "we simultaneously know a huge amount and very little about ancient life" in Rome's foremost ruin, the seaside city wholly

COURTESY OF STEPHEN INGLIS

consumed by a vomitous Vesuvius in 79 A.D.—Beard, the subversive and spiky Cambridge classicist, leaves few forensic (or semiotic) stones unturned. Alternately re-creating daily life and picking, brick by symbolic brick, at the abundant archaeological and psychological detritus, she proceeds to exhume, analyze, and reconstitute the time and place in a manner pleasing to traditionalists, revisionists, and inevitableists alike.

Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy

Shane Hamilton

PRINCETON

Couched as a social history of the U.S. trucking industry and its blue-collar "bandit" discontents, this book is in fact a left-field take on the New Deal's take-down. Arguing that long-haul drivers long ago helped sow the seeds of free-market rural conservatism—by disseminating cheap consumer goods on a broad geographic scale and abetting the rise of Big Agribusiness—Hamilton makes an aridly astute case for why many 20th-century trade regulations have been repealed, why a majority of red-state populists began to vote against what would seem to be their economic interests, and why certain postwar class skirmishes presaged the postmodern culture wars.

The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Life

Frances Wilson

FSG

This searing portrait of Dorothy Wordsworth draws on her celebrated journals but refracts them through a distinctly now sensibility. This is not the Dorothy so movingly addressed at

the conclusion of her brother's magnum opus "Tintern Abbey." Nor is this the self-effacing sororal companion of the poet's youth, and helpmeet and support of his sedate later life. Here, she is at the center of a nest of incest, anorexia, and destructive passions reminiscent of *Wuthering Heights* (indeed, Wilson speculates that Emily Brontë based Heathcliff and Cathy on her understanding of the relationship between the Wordsworth siblings). For all the author's aggressively contemporary psychological perspectives, Wilson has produced a deeply insightful, disturbing corrective to the conventional understanding of the angel of Dove Cottage.

The Hindus: An Alternative History

Wendy Doniger

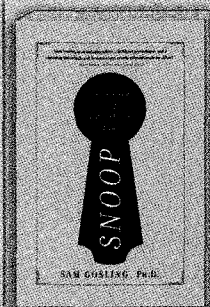
PENGUIN

Though its roots stretch to 1500 B.C. and its adherents number nearly 900 million, Hinduism—with its diffuse history, texts, and tenets—has long resisted easy chronology and Western familiarity. Enter Doniger, a professor at the University of Chicago, who gamely attempts organization and edification via narrative interpretation. En route, she mines and deconstructs canonical works of poetry and philosophy (*Rig Veda*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*); explicates basic concepts and dualities (karma, dharma, castes); scrambles traditional histories (women, animals, and untouchables are accorded new standing); and considers the assorted upshots of British colonialism on Indian culture, thereby pushing the Hindu story to the present. This chronicle is profoundly erudite, thoroughly engrossing, satisfyingly hefty (700-plus pages!), and delightfully idiosyncratic. **A**

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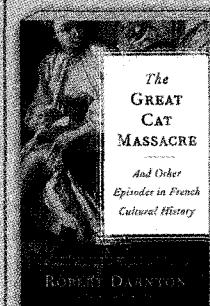
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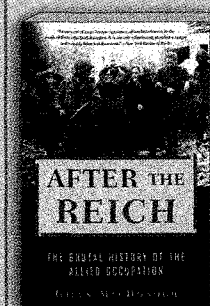


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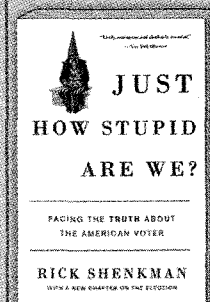


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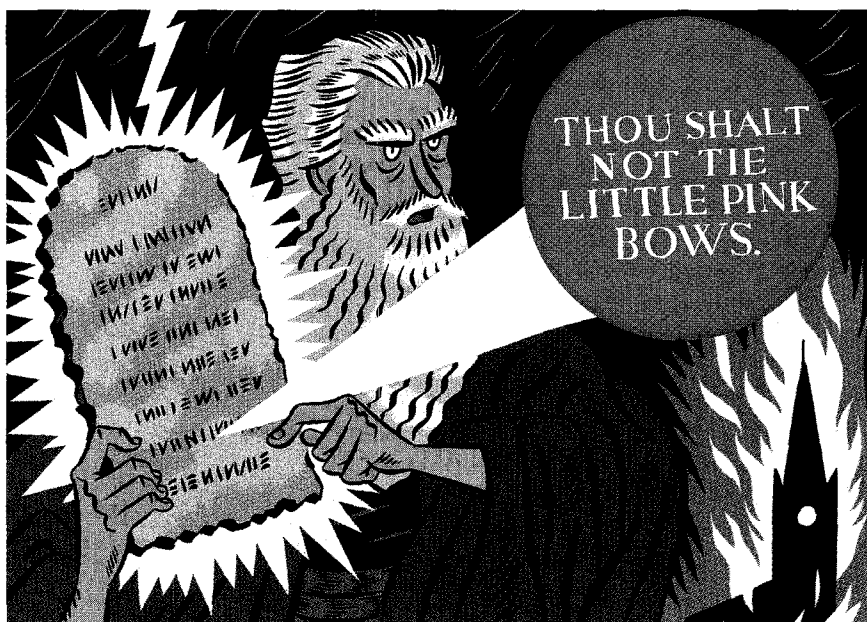
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WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

By Jeffrey Goldberg



I am the pastor of a small, historic Episcopal church in the Southeast. A bride-to-be wants to tie little pink bows to the pews for her wedding. Our wedding director says the church is too pretty to be ruined by little pink bows. The bride is deeply distressed. Meanwhile, the youth group wants to burn the church down and replace it with something more energy-efficient. I concede that the church, a Victorian pile with high ceilings and lots of stained glass, is costly to heat and maintain. Energy-efficient churches are often ugly, but pink bows would then cease to be an issue. Should I let the youth group burn down the church?

The Reverend D. L., N.C.

Your question reminds me, as I'm sure it does you, of an early *Sopranos* episode (*The Sopranos* was a sensation among southern Episcopal clergy). As you'll recall, Tony decides to burn down a friend's restaurant to stop it from becoming the scene of a mob hit, sparing his friend the controversy of a rubout, but leaving him without his livelihood. There's no equivalence here—pink bows might be an aesthetic sin, but they don't rise to Sixth Commandment evil-doing—yet the principle applies. My

point: don't let the youth group torch your church. Have they heard of weath-erizing? That would make for a fun and wholesome activity, and it would pre-serve what I imagine is a lovely place of worship.

Does gin actually make you crazy? Is it any worse for you than vodka, rum, or beer?

T. C., Chicago, Ill.

I turned this question over to *Atlantic* Health and Lifestyle Columnist Christopher Hitchens, who said that there is indeed something malevolent in gin. "My father, a Navy man, noticed that the people who drank whiskey lived a lot longer than those who drank gin. Gin can have an infuriating effect on people. If booze makes you quarrel-some, then gin can lead you to spiteful-ness." Hitchens reports that he gave up gin when his daughter was born. He recommends port as a reflective and cheerful alternative, "though it is said to lead to gout."

I am retired, and have never married. I have no children and no siblings. After I found out that I have health problems, two younger cousins of mine started inviting me over for dinner. They are good cooks and are

quite nice to me now. Lately, they've been telling me I should have a will written, which I have not done. I worry that they see me as a corpse with bags of money. How do I handle this without losing the dinners, and without wondering if they have a hidden agenda?

M. R., Seattle, Wash.

See a lawyer, immediately. Not neces-sarily to write your will, but to tell him about this. I, too, worry about your cou-sins' intentions. Here's a test: tell them by phone that you appreciate their advice, but they misunderstand your financial situation; you have only marginal sav-ings, and live mainly on Social Security, so a will is an unnecessary bother. Then see if they still invite you over. Better to learn that your cousins are mercenaries sooner rather than later.

My wife's friend wants to have a baby, and my wife thinks I should be the sperm donor. I don't have a problem with sperm donation, but I do have a problem with this woman. I just don't like her. She's mean and not very smart. I know the donor's job is finished when he hands over the cup, but this would be my baby too, and I would never want to have a baby with this person.

B. T., Calif.

If a man can't decide the fate of his sperm, what kind of a man is he? Answer: a very frightened husband of a man. You need to tell your wife that you're not sharing your quintessence. Your feelings are justified, and if your wife is an understanding person, she will stop making this request and give her friend the name of a sperm bank. If she's not an understanding person, I suggest you keep an image of her friend front and center in your mind as you engage in the precious-bodily-fluid-auto-extraction process. This will absolutely guarantee failure. ■

To submit your question or request for advice, please e-mail advice@theatlantic.com. Include your full name and address.

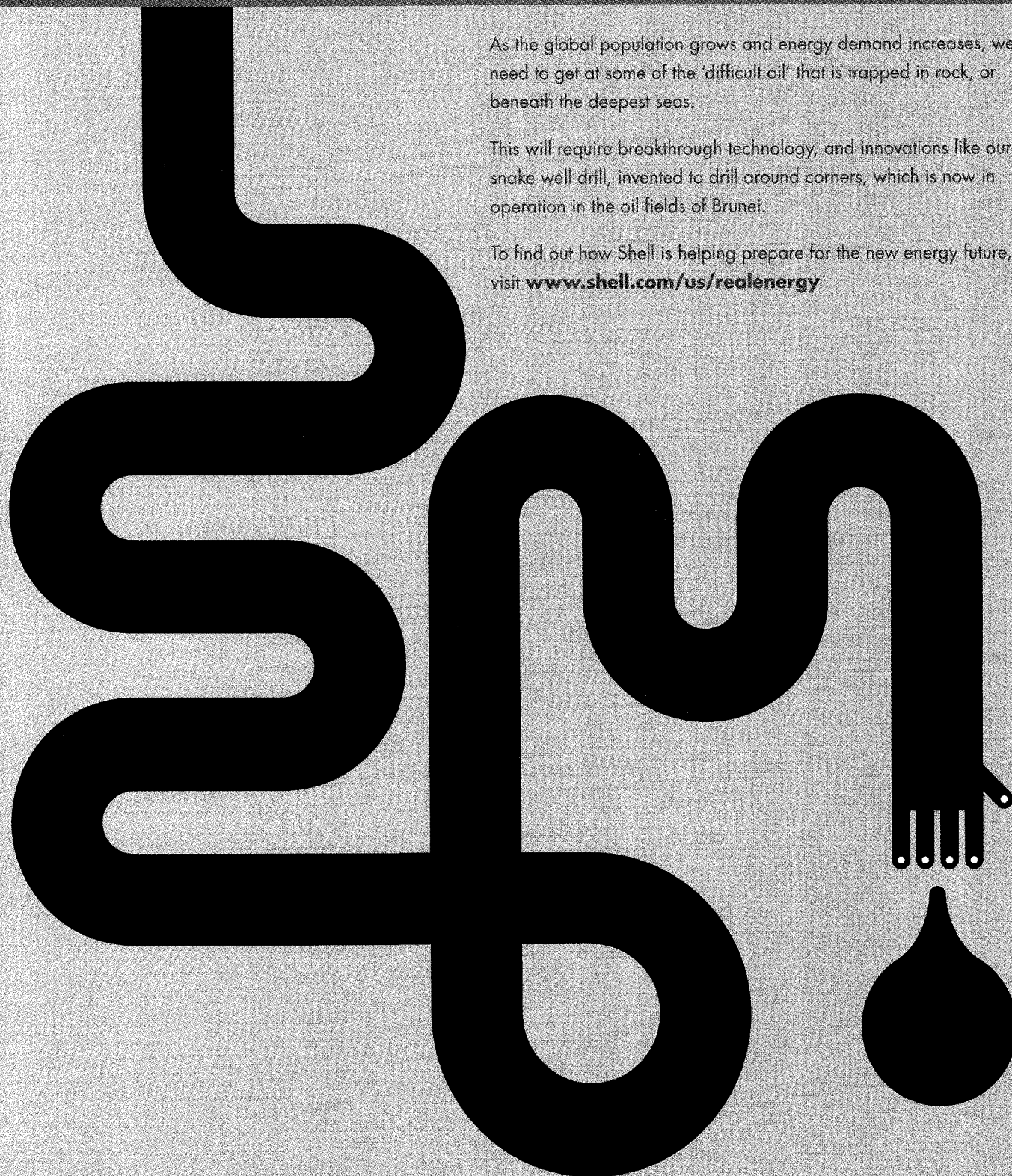
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